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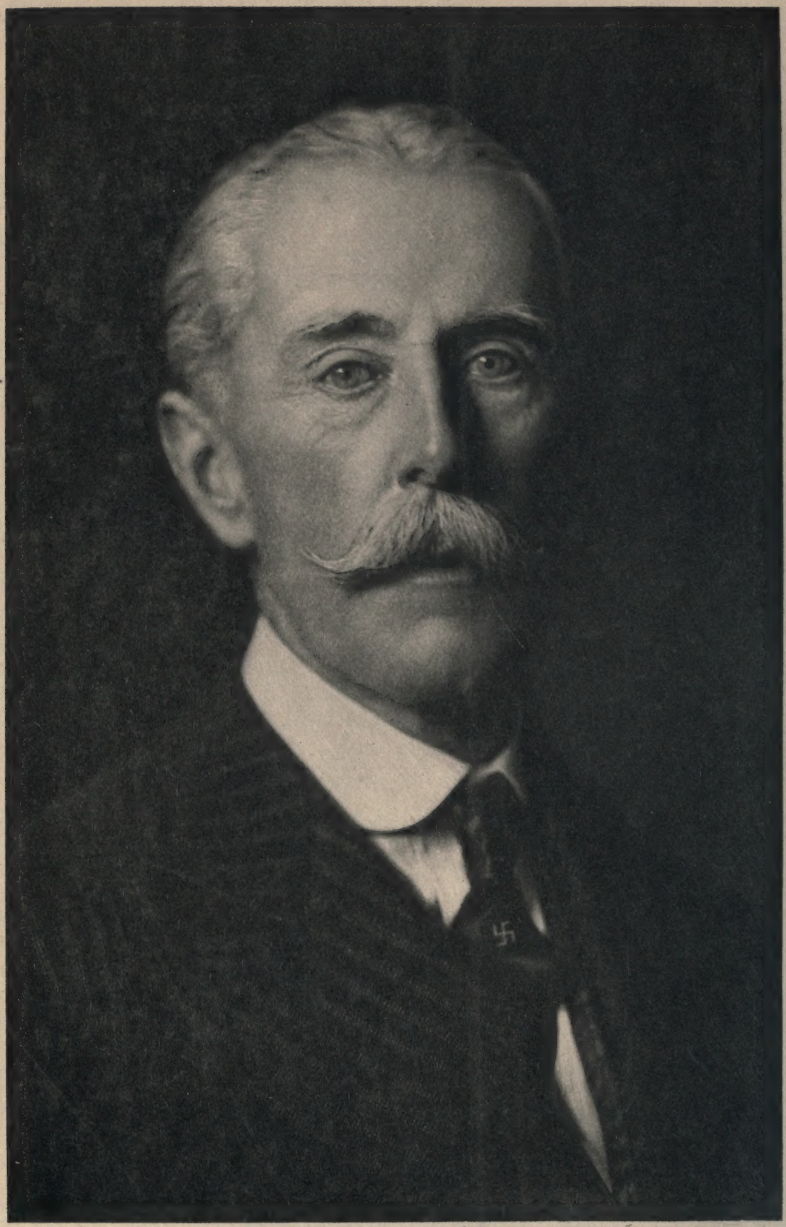
MY MISSION TO RUSSIA



Emery Walker ph.sc. Swaine photographer

Yours Ev. Buchanan

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My Mission to Russia

and

Other Diplomatic Memories

By

The Right Hon.

Sir GEORGE BUCHANAN

G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

British Ambassador, Petrograd, 1910-1918

With Maps and Illustrations

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VOL. I.

Cassell and Company, Limited

London, New York, Toronto and Melbourne

1923

First published *June* 1923
Reprinted *August* 1923

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Printed in Great Britain

To

MY WIFE

In Memoriam. April 21-25. 1922.

She knew not Death was at the door,
But lay transfigured, while her eyes
Glowed with a light from Paradise,
Where her sweet soul so soon would soar.

She looked so radiantly fair
And younger by a score of years,
As, smiling at me through her tears,
She raised her hands in silent prayer.

With that smile lingering on her face,
She passed into another land;
I pressed a lily in her hand,
And laid her in her resting-place.

G. W. B.

PREFACE

OF the making of many books there is at present no end; any more than there was in the days of the Preacher. If I am now adding to their number, it is not so much for the purpose of recounting all that I saw and did during the forty-five years of my diplomatic life, as of endeavouring to throw fresh light on some of the great political events with which I have been either directly or indirectly associated. From the point of view of political work Sofia and Petrograd were my two most important posts, and, though I have given sketches of my earlier ones, it is with Bulgaria and Russia that the major part of this book is concerned. During my five years' mission to the former I assisted at the declaration of Bulgarian independence and the subsequent recognition of Prince Ferdinand as King. At the latter, where I spent rather more than seven years, I witnessed the outbreak of the Great War, the overthrow of the Empire, the rise and fall of the Provisional Government, and the Bolshevik Revolution.

It was while I was Second Secretary at Vienna that I first met Prince Ferdinand—then an officer in an Austrian cavalry regiment—and I was there when he, in 1887, offered himself as a candidate

for the Bulgarian throne, which had become vacant in consequence of Prince Alexander's abdication. So few people now remember what happened in the Balkans forty years ago that I have briefly sketched the history of Bulgaria between 1885 and 1904—the year in which I was appointed Agent and Consul-General at Sofia—in order that its later developments, as well as the mixed feelings of gratitude and suspicion with which Russia was regarded by many Bulgarians, may be the better understood. This sketch, and the chapters covering the period of my mission, are founded on the official reports written by me at the time, and I have adhered to the views expressed in those reports without allowing myself to be influenced by the part which Prince Ferdinand and his country played in the war. I have, indeed, followed this rule throughout my book, and in writing about Russia and the Russians I have been guided by the views recorded either in my official or in my private correspondence when I was at Petrograd.

I left Sofia in 1909, and after a year's interlude at The Hague I found myself once more drawn into the vortex of Balkan politics when I took up my appointment as Ambassador at Petrograd at the end of 1910. For the first year or so the Balkans remained more or less quiescent, and it was to questions affecting the maintenance of the Anglo-Russian understanding that I had to give my immediate attention. For the general reader the chapters dealing with the so-called Potsdam Agreement and the oft-recurring controversies about Persia may seem unattractive; but they are of historical

interest, since there were, as I have shown, moments when those two questions threatened to shipwreck that understanding. Had they done so, the whole course of recent history might have been changed. The situation was fortunately saved, thanks to the untiring efforts of Sir Edward Grey and M. Sazonoff; and when, in 1912, the Balkan question once more entered on an acute stage, the two Governments worked wholeheartedly together for the maintenance of European peace.

I have passed in review each successive phase of that crisis: the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty of Alliance of 1912, the formation of the Balkan Confederation, the first Balkan War, the rival claims of Austria and Russia that so nearly involved all Europe in the conflict, the conclusion of peace on terms that constituted the triumph of Slavdom and then the mad quarrel of the Balkan allies over the spoils, the second Balkan war and the Treaty of Bucharest which undid all that had been achieved by the first war. I have shown how Russia, torn between the wish of furthering Slav interests and the fear of international complications, more than once during the crisis had to readjust her policy; and, though loath to criticize my old friend and collaborator, I have pointed out certain mistakes which Sazonoff, in my opinion, committed.

I have, on the other hand, had the satisfaction of vindicating his conduct of the negotiations which followed the presentation of the Austrian ultimatum at Belgrade, and of being able, from personal knowledge, to affirm that he left no stone unturned in his

desire to avoid a rupture. I have, at the same time, refuted the charges advanced by certain German writers and shown how utterly unfounded is their contention that Russia wanted war and that we egged her on by promising her our armed support. As regards the war itself, I have but outlined the course of the military operations so as to explain their bearing on the internal situation, more especially after the army, left almost defenceless before the enemy, had in 1915 suffered disaster after disaster.

It has been a melancholy task to trace the gradual decline of a great Empire—to contrast the enthusiasm and the promise of the early war-days with the depression and progressive collapse that followed; to picture a united nation rallying in loyal devotion round its Sovereign, and then to depict the same nation, weary of the sufferings and privations imposed on it by an utterly incompetent administration, turning against that Sovereign and driving him from the throne. Nor has it been less sad to follow in the Emperor's footsteps and to watch him, with his inbred fatalism, deliberately choosing a path that is to lead him and his to their doom. I have not attempted to screen his faults; but I have portrayed him as I knew him—a lovable man, possessed of many good qualities, a true and loyal ally, having, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, his country's true interests at heart. In explaining the rôle played by the Empress, I have shown how she, though a good woman, actuated by the best of motives, was instrumental in bringing about the final catastrophe. Her fatal misconception of the meaning

of the crisis through which Russia was passing made her impose on the Emperor Ministers who had no other recommendation than that they were prepared to carry out her reactionary policy. Those of my readers who expect to find new and sensational revelations of Rasputin's doings at the Russian Court will be disappointed. I have told what I believe to be the truth about him without retailing all the unfounded gossip that has gathered round his name.

I have described in detail the progress of the Revolution, the constitution of the Provisional Government, its long-drawn-out struggle with the Soviet, its failure to arrest the demoralization of the army, its deplorable weakness in dealing with the Bolsheviks, its tactless handling of the Korniloff episode, and its final collapse before the Bolshevik onslaught. My work in treating of this period has been facilitated by the permission, kindly given me by Sir Eyre Crowe, to consult my official correspondence in the archives of the Foreign Office; and by the valuable assistance which the librarian, Mr. Gaselee, was so good as to lend me in the matter. As the Provisional Government and the old Autocracy have both disappeared from the scene, I have been able to tell the story of my mission to Russia with far greater freedom than would otherwise have been possible. I have approached the subject from the objective standpoint, and have endeavoured, in my judgment of men and things, to play the part of an impartial observer, whose views on the great Russian tragedy may be of service to the future historian.

If I have given this book the form of memoirs, and have said much more about myself than I had originally intended, the responsibility lies with that great master-critic, my friend Edmund Gosse. He has shown such a kindly interest in the progress of my work, and has so impressed me with the importance of the personal equation, that I have recast some of the chapters so as to satisfy his craving for "more personal touches." Though I could never induce him to put life into my poor prose with a touch of his magic pen, he has given me a much needed moral encouragement for which I shall always be grateful.

G. W. B.

January 25, 1923.

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My Mission to Russia

CHAPTER I

1876—1880

THOUGH diplomats cannot, like poets, claim the distinction of being born and not made, I may in a certain sense be said to have been born into diplomacy, for I was born at the Legation at Copenhagen, where my father was then Minister. He had begun his career under Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, after the latter's appointment as Ambassador at Constantinople in 1825, and when, half a century later—in April, 1876—the doors of the diplomatic service were opened to me, the great Elchi, mindful of the above fact, sent for me and gave me his blessing, wishing me God-speed on my journey through life. A strikingly handsome man in spite of his ninety years, he still retained that commanding personality which had, for good or for evil, made him so long the dominating factor in the Ottoman Empire.

In my day entrance into the diplomatic service was by nomination, with a qualifying examination that did not impose a severe tax on a candidate's intelligence, while the work allotted to a newly joined attaché during his preliminary training at the Foreign Office was of a purely clerical kind, such as the copying of despatches

and the ciphering and deciphering of telegrams. It had, however, its compensations, for it was a novel and interesting experience to be admitted behind the scenes and to get a glimpse into the inner workings of diplomacy, more especially at a moment when the Eastern question was looming large on the horizon and when the famous Berlin Memorandum was being drawn up by Prince Bismarck without previous consultation with Her Majesty's Government. The Queen, I remember, was so indignant at the slight thus passed on her Government by Prince Bismarck that she gave vent to her feelings in the following minute, which I read at the time on a despatch from Berlin: "Prince Bismarck is treating England as if she were a third-rate Power, and this makes the Queen's blood boil."

I only remained at the Foreign Office for a few weeks, as my father, whose term of service as Ambassador at Vienna was drawing to a close, had asked for me to be attached to that Embassy. For a young attaché Vienna was then a delightful post, more especially when he had, as the Ambassador's son, the entrée into its exclusive society, where one was either *Du und Du* with all one's contemporaries or else more or less ignored. The Viennese were so keen about dancing that I remember once going to a ball at Prince Schwarzenberg's which began at eleven o'clock in the morning and continued till six in the evening; but the dances then in vogue and the etiquette that had to be observed with regard to them would hardly appeal to the fox-trotters of the present day. At the Court balls even the *trois temps* was vetoed as being *peu convenable*, while at every ball there was a *Comtessin Zimmer*, into which no married woman was allowed to penetrate.

There the girls gossiped with their partners between the dances, keeping a jealous and watchful eye on any erring sister who ventured to overstep the bounds of the most innocent flirtation.

Dancing engagements, moreover, were booked for the whole season, so that one always had the same set of partners at every ball; while if one was prevented going to any ball, one had to find a substitute to fulfil one's engagements.

But, despite some of its old world ways and customs, I shall always retain the pleasantest recollection of Austrian society, of its kind and generous hospitalities, and of its *Gemüthlichkeit*—that untranslatable Viennese expression that has no equivalent in English. Apart, moreover, from its pleasant social life, Vienna could boast of a number of theatres of a very high order, which to an ardent playgoer like myself were a source of endless enjoyment. The Burg Theater was then still in its old quarters, adjoining the Palace, where, in spite of the smallness of its old-fashioned house, the actors were far more at home and in their element than they afterwards were in the more spacious and sumptuous theatre that was built for them a few years later. Sonnenthal and Frau Wolter were still at the zenith of their fame as exponents of the dramatic art, and with them and with a whole *troupe* of consummate artists the Burg Theater was no unworthy rival of the great French theatre in the Rue Richelieu.

Nor were one's amusements confined to Vienna, for in the autumn my father and I frequently went to hunt at Gödollö, near Buda Pesth, where even a humble attaché like myself was brought into imme-

diate personal contact with the Emperor and Empress and the ill-fated Crown Prince Rudolph. Count Andrassy and many of the Hungarian magnates were also constantly to be met in the hunting-field, so that my father combined business with pleasure, while I spent most of my evening ciphering the results of his conversations with the Emperor and the Chancellor. But of all the followers of the hunt it was the Empress, with her radiant beauty, her fine seat on a horse and her wonderful figure, who was the cynosure of all eyes. Horses and the care of her figure were her two chief interests in life, and she carried her love of equestrianism so far that she even practised circus-riding in her private riding school at Gödollö.

Horses, too, furnished her favourite topic of conversation, and on one occasion my stepmother, who was no respecter of persons, after listening for some time to what the Empress had to say on the subject, dryly remarked : " *Est-ce que Votre Majesté ne pense qu'aux chevaux ?* " History does not record Her Majesty's answer, but I should imagine that the conversation was brought to a speedy close !

After serving a year as attaché at Vienna I returned to the Foreign Office, and in 1878 I was appointed Third Secretary at Rome, where I spent a happy year and a half under the best and kindest of chiefs—Sir Augustus Paget.

Rome will always cast its spell over all who come within its walls, but the Rome of forty-five years ago was more entrancing even than the Rome of to-day. It had not yet become a great modern capital, and was still to a large extent the Rome of Papal times. The new town, which now encircles old Rome,

was still in its infancy. The beautiful grounds of the Villa Ludovisi had not yet been transformed into countless streets of commonplace houses. The builder had not yet laid a sacrilegious hand on the domain of the Campagna, which then almost reached the walls. The excavations in the Forum, which have added so much that is of interest to our knowledge of classical times, had, it is true, hardly begun; but, from the purely æsthetic point of view, the Forum was even more picturesque than at present.

Our Embassy was already installed in its present quarters at the Villa Torlonia, but a parsimonious Government had not yet sold the lower portion of its delightful garden, which was half as large again as at present. Flanked on the one side by the Aurelian wall, it was within a stone's throw of Porta Pia, so that, riding out through that gate, one could reach the Campagna in a few minutes and gallop for miles over its vast plain. In the winter, too, not being overburdened with work, I could generally manage to hunt twice a week, though, as one often danced till five in the morning, an early start for a distant meet was not always an unmixed pleasure. For Rome was a very gay place in spite of the division of its society into Blacks and Whites. The great palaces of the aristocracy, most of which are now closed, were then the scene of constant entertainments, more especially during the ten days immediately preceding Lent, when the carnival was celebrated. Society danced and feasted every night, while in the afternoon King Carnival, who has long since died a natural death, made merry in the Corso. The whole street was hung with gorgeous draperies, and there, from one of the

many balconies, one watched and took part in the battle of flowers and confetti, as the revellers, in every sort of fancy dress, passed in their gaily decorated cars. Then, when the Corso had been cleared, the festivities closed with the curious spectacle of a race of riderless horses known by the name of "Bárberi."

By the end of 1879 my term had come for service at a distant post, and I was appointed Second Secretary at Tokio. Sorry as I was to leave Rome, I was enchanted with the idea of seeing the Far East and of being able to spend a couple of months in the United States on my way there. Among the many good intentions, with which I have helped to pave the abode of the wicked in the nether world, is that of keeping a diary. As, however, my journey to Japan was one of the few occasions on which I did carry out this good intention, I am able to record some of the impressions which the United States of forty years ago made on me. Washington, as a town, did not smile on me, though the Thorntons, with whom I stayed at the Embassy, were kindness itself. New York I found much more amusing. Its cafés, I noted, could compare favourably with those of Paris, and its social life was altogether more to my taste. I was given dinners, taken to theatres and dances and introduced to all the pretty young ladies. Like so many of my countrymen, I fell a victim to their charms, and in less than a fortnight I became engaged —but only for twenty-four hours. My prospective father-in-law, whom I had never seen till I was ushered into his bedroom, where he was laid up with a bad attack of gout, told me, on my asking for his blessing, that he had no use for me as a son-in-law. He added, however, that I would live to thank him—and I have.

After leaving New York I spent a few days with some acquaintances near Boston. America, unfortunately for me, had not then gone dry, and my host's idea of hospitality was to take me round the various clubs and bars where I had to drink cocktails with his friends. On one occasion—it was a national anniversary of some kind—I actually drank thirteen before lunch; or, to be accurate, in the course of the morning, for luncheon did not see me that day. From Boston I went to Niagara, where I was joined by my friend Sydney Campbell, who was travelling with me to Japan; and, after paying the homage of our unstinted admiration to the Horse Shoe Fall, we proceeded together to Chicago. Here we got into touch with the business side of American life and devoted our short stay to visiting its stockyards and granaries. Continuing our journey, we crossed the Mississippi and the Missouri and soon found ourselves in the open prairie—one enormous plain, without a sign of life save a few stray cattle grazing, with now and then a grove of trees and an occasional farmhouse. "It reminds me," I wrote in my journal, "of the Campagna on a large scale—but of the Campagna stripped of all its beauty—of its ruins, its aqueducts, of the hills lit up by the warm Italian sun and of that glorious dome with its background of deep blue sky. Here all is cold, grey and melancholy—and so monotonous. You wake up in the morning and seem to be just where you were the evening before. Last night it looked better, as there were several large prairie fires, which relieved the dreariness of the endless plain." After passing Cheyenne we got our first sight of the Rocky Mountains—a pleasant change after the prairie—and we kept on ascending till we reached

Sherman, more than 8,000 feet above the sea. The scenery, on the rest of our journey to Ogden and Salt Lake City, was very picturesque, with much red sandstone and many fine rocks.

The following description of the Mormon city is taken from my journal: "It is a very clean, prosperous-looking place, with unpretentious, neat houses surrounded by gardens or orchards. On the morning after our arrival we took a carriage; and our driver, an Englishman, acted as our guide and informant. First we went to the Tithe House, where all Mormons, including even the ladies of the *demi-monde*, have to pay in the tenth of what they earn. We next visited the 'Temple'—a granite building which it will take another four or five years to finish—and then proceeded to the 'Tabernacle.' This is a long, ugly, wooden building, some two hundred and fifty feet long, of an oblong shape, with a low roof. It can hold twelve thousand people, and, so remarkable are its acoustic properties, that we could hear a pin fall which our guide dropped some seventy yards from where we were standing. All the roof is hung with festoons of leaves so as to prevent the slightest echo. After leaving the 'Tabernacle' we called on Mr. Taylor, the president of the Mormons, at the Lion House. He is a man between sixty and seventy, with nothing remarkable about him. He received us very courteously and kept us talking for some twenty minutes. He comes from Westmorland, and was in prison with Joe Smith when the latter was killed by the mob at Nauvoo. He was fortunate enough to escape himself with only a gunshot wound.

"As president he is not regarded with the same

feelings of awe and reverence as was his predecessor. Brigham Young, unlike Mr. Taylor, was a man of genius and iron will who, when he donned the prophet's mantle on the death of Joe Smith, conceived the idea of a great emigration to the West, where the Mormons could live in peace, safe from the persecution of the mob. To carry out this plan he had to lead them across the prairies of Nebraska, through the mountain paths of the Rockies, and over the great American desert. This he successfully accomplished, and in July, 1847, the promised land was reached, though not without the loss of many lives. In the choice of a settlement he again showed his wisdom, and the extraordinary prosperity which Salt Lake City has attained is due to his energy, shrewdness and powers of organization. He was an extraordinary man, but coarse and entirely unscrupulous as to the means which he employed to maintain his autocratic rule. Since his death the influence of the Mormon chiefs over the people has sensibly declined.

"Brigham Young had sixteen wives and about as many more who were 'sealed' to him—an expression which seems to mean that, though not his wives in the strict sense of the term in this world, they aspire to be so in the next. Thus a woman may be sealed to one husband for this life and to another for the life to come. At present no one seems to have more than four wives, and most people find two enough, as the expenses of keeping them is greater than it was owing to the 'Gentiles' having introduced a more expensive style of living than formerly. Where there are two wives in one house the house generally has two doors,

and the two establishments are thus quite distinct. Our guide pointed out a house from which wife number one had driven wife number two and pursued her, flying down the street in her nightgown. Brigham Young built a very fine house for his last favourite, which is called, after her, the Amelia Palace, and which is *the* house in the city. Utah is not a State, but a territory, and the United States Government appoint a governor. It makes its own municipal laws, subject to the veto of the governor. Drunkenness is punished by a fine of from five to ten dollars, and in the event of the offender being unable to pay his fine he has to make up the amount due by working on the roads. Judging, however, by the state of the roads, there must either be very few poor people or very little drunkenness in the Mormon settlement."

Continuing our journey to San Francisco, we crossed the Sierra Nevada, where our train was blocked by the snow slides, and we had to spend sixteen hours in the bar room of a miserable little station, sleeping, or trying to sleep, on the bare planks. One of the curious sights of San Francisco in those days was the Chinese quarter, round which we were taken one night by a policeman. The Chinese lived there quite apart, in a town of their own, with their own butchers, bakers, chemists, jewellers, etc. Although it was past ten o'clock, we found all the shops still open, and after looking in at some of them we visited the temple, theatre and women's quarter.

On April 24 we started on a trip to the Yosemite Valley, in spite of being warned that we should be stopped by the deep snow. We slept the first night

at Merced, and then, hiring a buggy and pair, drove to Mariposa, where we passed the night. There we left our buggy and crossed the mountain on horseback, and after breaking our journey at Hite's Cove, a little mining village, had a delightful ride through the Merced Canyon into the Valley. I append my impressions as recorded in my journal at the time:

"Our path lay through woods sloping down to the river, which was tumbling over the rocks fifty feet below. The grass was a brilliant green and sparkled in the sunlight, the trees were all bursting into life, flowers of every hue covered the ground, while a shrub with the appropriate name of 'Red Bud' gave life and colour to the woods. There were ranunculi of the most delicate yellow, campanulas of the forget-me-not blue, there were red flowers, white flowers, purple flowers, and flowers of every colour under heaven. The hillside across the river was one blaze of bright orange, but we were not near enough to distinguish the flower itself. As we approached the Yosemite the scenery became wilder, and we once more began to ascend a narrow stony path as the hillsides became steeper and rocks took the place of grass. At three o'clock we entered the valley. My first impression was one of disappointment. I could not see what there was to rave about in those great rocks rising up so straight to heaven; they were grand and savage, but where was their charm? I failed at first even to realize their size. I soon, however, learned to understand and appreciate their unique beauty. It grew on me hour by hour, especially in the evening light. At the part of the valley where Bernard's Hotel is, one feels rather

oppressed and imprisoned by the hills, but some two miles down the river the valley broadens. There we got on to a little sand island, at the foot of 'El Capitan,' and laid down for an hour after dinner. Lying there, looking up at that gigantic rock rising over three thousand feet straight into the air, faced on the other side by rocks of almost equal grandeur—the two forming a sort of frame to the landscape beyond —with the dark pines, standing out against the pale blue of the sky, so 'thick inlaid with patines of bright gold,' I felt how wrong my first impressions had been and how all that has been said of the valley falls short of the reality."

Re-reading the above description of the Yosemite after a lapse of more than forty years, I ask myself whether, could I be transported there once more, I should be equally impressed by its beauty and whether I should be prompted to give expression to my feelings in the same poetic language as when I was young. Sainte Beuve once wrote:

Il existe, en un mot, chez les trois quarts des hommes,
Un poète, mort jeune, à qui l'homme survit.

Alfred de Musset replied in a sonnet in which he contested the truth of this dictum, and after taking Sainte Beuve to task for having blasphemed "*dans la langue des Dieux*," told him to remember

qu'en nous il existe souvent
Un poète endormi, toujours jeune et vivant.

I fear, nevertheless, that as a rule the poet born in us sleeps so soundly as we grow older that only some

deep emotion, be it of joy or grief, ever rouses him from his slumber. For, worn by the battles and sorrows of life, we most of us find

> That nothing can bring back the hour
> Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower.

On leaving the valley we tried to return to Merced by another route across the mountains, but the snow was so deep that we had to get off our horses, and after leading them for three hours uphill at a snail's pace we gave up the attempt. Owing to the time thus lost we only reached the foot of the mountain that separates the Merced valley from Hite's Cove late in the evening, and had to make our way as best we could up a narrow bridle path, skirting the edge of a precipice which in places went sheer down for some two thousand feet. It was so pitch dark when we got to the top that we drove our horses before us and followed them on foot, as they seemed to be able to find the path easier than we could. We only got to Hite's Cove at eleven at night, dead tired and half famished.

CHAPTER II

1880–1888

LEAVING San Francisco on board the *City of Pekin*, we reached Yokohama on May 24, after a tedious and uneventful voyage of twenty days. Japan was then in a transition period. Though she had already started on the road that was to lead her, in such an incredibly short time, to the high position which she now holds among the Great Powers of the world, she was not so Europeanized and retained more of the picturesque charm of the Old Japan than at present. Save for the Tokio-Yokohama line, railways were non-existent. Though the area of one's travels was thus circumscribed, one saw what one actually did see of the country at much greater advantage travelling by jin-rickshaw and on foot than one could possibly have done by rail. During the long excursions which I made into the interior every summer I spent a night on the top of Fuji-Yama, that peerless mountain that rises for more than 12,000 feet so majestically from the plain; ascended Asama Yama, the great active volcano; went to Kioto, the ancient capital; visited Nikko as well as other shrines; shot the rapids on some of the rivers, and walked hundreds of miles across country, wherever my fancy took me, occasionally coming to places where Europeans had never been seen. Except on one occasion, when the keeper of a tea-house displayed the old

anti-foreign feeling by refusing to take us in, we met with the most friendly reception, and the best rooms in the villages where we slept were always placed at our disposal. My native cook and manservant accompanied me on these expeditions, and, though when at home they never walked a yard, they were never too tired to provide me with an excellent repast even when, as on the occasion of our ascending Asama Yama, we had been seventeen hours on the move owing to our guides losing their way and bringing us down on the wrong side of the mountain.

When I was at Tokio the King, then Prince George of Wales, and his elder brother the late Duke of Clarence, who were midshipmen on board the *Bacchante*, came to Japan. The entertainments arranged in their honour were on much the same lines as those given the Prince of Wales during his recent visit. They included the, to us, novel sport of catching wild duck in butterfly nets as they rose from the water trenches into which they had been lured by decoy ducks; Japanese polo; dinners *à la Japonaise*, and a garden party at the palace. The Mikado also paid them the special compliment of going, if I am not mistaken, for the first time, on board a foreign ship of war as guest at a luncheon on the *Bacchante*. One expedition on which I accompanied them was to the famous bronze Buddha at Kamakura, some fifteen or twenty miles from Yokohama. We rode out a numerous party, but after a sumptuous picnic luncheon no one except the two young princes cared to make the return journey on horseback, so I had the honour of riding back alone with them in the evening.

Life in Japan was very cheap in those days, and,

among other luxuries, I had a small stud of racing ponies. At Yokohama, where the British and other foreign colonies resided, there were two meetings every year, with separate races for Japanese and Chinese ponies, as the latter are far the better of the two. The Japanese, who were very keen on racing, always tried to prevent foreigners buying any of their best ponies; but at the Autumn Meeting of 1882 I was lucky enough to win the Champion Japanese Race, for the third time in succession with the same pony, and to keep the £100 Challenge Cup. At the same meeting I won the heavy-weight race, riding myself, while my best China pony would have won the Champion China Race had he not been fouled by a Japanese jockey. On my appealing to the stewards of the Jockey Club, the latter questioned the offending jockey and, as he protested that he had not fouled my pony on purpose, awarded him the race.

Sir Harry Parkes, who was then our Minister at Tokio, was a very able man with a long record of distinguished services, and had, when attached to Lord Elgin's Mission in 1860, been treacherously arrested by the Chinese and kept in heavy chains for eleven days. He refused to purchase his liberty on terms that might compromise the success of Lord Elgin's negotiations, and was condemned to be executed. On the seizure of the Summer Palace the order for his execution was countermanded and he was released. Appointed Minister to Japan in 1865, he rendered the Mikado great assistance during the early years of the new régime and more than once narrowly escaped assassination. His temper, however, was not of the best, and he sometimes made things very unpleasant for his

staff. On one occasion—it was before my arrival—they could not find a despatch which he had asked for. He thereupon went fuming into the Chancery, pulled all the papers out of the archive press, threw them on the floor, kicked them about the room, and then, turning to the secretaries, exclaimed: "That will teach you to keep the archives in proper order and to find despatches when I want them." He was absent on leave when I arrived in Tokio, and had, when in London, been given a hint by the Foreign Office to treat his staff with greater consideration. On his return he completely changed his tactics and, in all his dealings with me, he was courtesy itself. He showed me much kindness, and he never gave me any cause for complaint save as regarded the length of his despatches. After copying one that covered more than four hundred pages of foolscap I felt inclined to remind its author of what Sheridan said to Gibbon, when the latter thanked him for having spoken in the House of "that luminous writer Gibbon"—"Not luminous; I said voluminous!"

I left Japan early in 1883 and returned home, stopping on the way at Hong Kong, Ceylon, Cairo, Malta and Gibraltar. After taking a long leave I once more went to Vienna, where I had been appointed Second Secretary, my pleasure in returning to my old post being enhanced by the fact that the Pagets were about the same time transferred there from Rome.

In the following year I became engaged to Lady Georgina Bathurst, in spite of dear Sir Augustus's warning that for a poor man like myself to marry would spell ruin for my career. Marriage is always a great

adventure, and to embark on it on £1,000 a year in one of the most expensive capitals in Europe was no doubt a somewhat rash proceeding; but, fortunately, Sir Augustus proved a false prophet, for my marriage gave me a helpmate, who not only made my life an ideally happy one, but who, by her personality and by her happy gift of inspiring friendship, largely contributed to such success as I have achieved in my career. How we managed to live for three years at Vienna without falling seriously into debt is still somewhat of a mystery to me. We had a charming little apartment within a few minutes' walk of the Embassy, and we went everywhere and did everything, thanks chiefly to the kindness of our many friends. The Pagets always took us with them to balls and parties, so that we were spared the expense of keeping a two-horse *fiacre*—for one-horse carriages were tabooed in society—while other friends drove us to the races and placed their boxes at the opera and theatres at our disposal. One of the most expensive items in our budget was that of country-house visits for shooting and hunting, on account of the tips which they entailed, but we paid many such visits to the Kinskys, Larisches, Apponyis and other friends.

Princess Pauline Metternich, whose husband had been Austrian Ambassador in Paris under the Second Empire, was then the recognized leader of Viennese society. She had taken the Rothschilds under her special protection, and it was thanks to her influence that they were for the first time admitted within its charmed circle. She organized Blumen-Corsos in the Prater, which so captivated the pleasure-loving Viennese that they sang her praises in the following quatrain:

Es giebt nur eine Kaiserstadt,
Es giebt nur ein Wien;
Es giebt nur eine Fürstin,
Metternich Pauline.

But amongst all the entertainments which she organized in our time the one which I remember best was a musical revue given at the Palais Schwarzenberg, entitled the *Götterdämmerung in Wien*, in which the gods and goddesses, bored with Olympus, come to Vienna in various disguises in search of Hebe, who had fled there. After visiting all the sights of the capital and assisting at a variety entertainment that included scenes from the *Wiener Walzer*, *Excelsior*, and the *Zigeuner Baron*, they eventually find Hebe in the Wurzel Prater and return rejuvenated to Olympus. Princess Metternich had herself, in collaboration with Baron Bourgoing, a former French diplomat, written the libretto, and had, by enlisting the services of all the most beautiful women of the Austrian aristocracy, including Prince Kinsky's two daughters, Princess Montenuovo and Countess Wilczek, Countess Czernin, Countess Amelie Podstatsky, Baronin Bourgoing and Countess Irma Schönborn—who afterwards married Prince Fürstenberg, the Emperor William's friend—converted the final apotheosis into a dream of fair women.

Politically speaking, Vienna as a post derived its main interest from the conflicting ambitions of Austria and Russia in the Balkans; and as I shall have so much to say about the Balkan question in subsequent chapters, a brief review of the acute crisis through which it was then passing may help to explain its later developments. The aim of Russia's policy ever since the War

of Liberation had always been to make Bulgaria a Russian province, and with this end in view she had placed the Government of the principality under the control of specially selected generals. Whenever Prince Alexander ventured to dispute their authority he was reminded that he was but the instrument of the Tsar, till, finding his position intolerable, he effected a reconciliation with the Liberal party, in the hope of emancipating his adopted country from Russian domination.

In September, 1885, a successful *coup d'état* at Philippopolis had resulted in the proclamation of the union of the province of Eastern Roumelia with the principality, and in the assumption by Prince Alexander of the title of Prince of Northern and Southern Bulgaria. This was such a flagrant violation of the Treaty of Berlin that Europe could not condone it off-hand, while Russia at once declined to recognize a union which had been effected without her intervention. The Tsar marked his disapproval by striking Prince Alexander's name off the roll of the Russian army and by recalling all the Russian officers from Bulgaria. At the same time, through his ambassador at Constantinople, he encouraged the Sultan to restore the *status quo ante* in Eastern Roumelia by force of arms. The idea of such a Turkish execution found favour with Russia's associates in the *Drei Kaiser Bund*, and the execution was only stayed by the firm attitude of Her Majesty's Government, who recognized the advantage of having a strong Bulgaria as a bulwark against future aggression.

Had Austria adopted a bolder attitude and recognized the union as an accomplished fact she might

have supplanted Russia at Sofia; but Count Kalnoky's one desire was to avert the danger of a breach with Russia, while he was afraid that by supporting Bulgaria he might weaken Austria's influence at Belgrade. Meanwhile Greece and Serbia, disturbed by the idea of Bulgaria's aggrandisement, were actively preparing to assert their claims to territorial compensation; and though, thanks to the intervention of the Powers, the former was forced to hold her hand, the latter declared war on Bulgaria in November, 1885. The position of the Bulgarian army, disorganized by the recall of its Russian officers, and stationed for the most part in Eastern Roumelia, seemed almost desperate. A small number of troops had, however, been posted near the Serbian frontier, and by forced marches Prince Alexander succeeded in bringing up the rest of his army to their support and in routing the Serbian army after a three days battle at Slivnitza. Following up his victory, he occupied Pirot; but his march on Belgrade was arrested by an Austrian ultimatum to the effect that, if he attempted to advance any farther, he would find himself face to face with the Austrian army. Finally, after prolonged negotiations, a conference of the Powers at Constantinople adopted a formula conferring on the Prince of Bulgaria in the abstract, instead of on Prince Alexander personally, the Governor-Generalship of Eastern Roumelia for a term of five years, in accordance with Article XVII of the Treaty of Berlin, under which the consent of all the Powers would be required for its renewal.

The fact that this union was but a personal one was at once exploited by Russia to undermine the power of the prince and to represent him as the one bar to the

real union which Russia was prepared to confer on Bulgaria, and a few months later a military conspiracy, working under her auspices, brought about his abduction and enforced abdication. Recalled almost immediately by a counter-revolution, the Prince landed at Roustchouk and addressed a last but fatal appeal to the Tsar in a telegram which, after announcing his return, concluded with the words: "Russia gave me my crown. I am ready to return it into the hands of her Sovereign." The Emperor's reply was a crushing one. He disapproved of the Prince's return and declared that he would abstain from all intervention in the affairs of the principality so long as His Highness remained in Bulgaria. Despairing of being able to reign in the face of Russia's opposition, and alarmed by the discovery of the widespread character of the recent plot, Prince Alexander abdicated and, after appointing a regency composed of Stambuloff and two others, left Bulgaria on February 8, 1886.

There followed a prolonged crisis fraught with danger to the peace of Europe. Russia refused to recognize the regency and despatched General Kaulbars to Sofia, with the mission of terrorizing the Bulgarians into submission. In spite, however, of his declaring the elections invalid, the Grand Sobranje met and occupied itself with the difficult task of finding a prince willing to accept the thorny crown which Prince Alexander had laid down. Prince Waldemar of Denmark was eventually elected, but declined the honour, while the Prince of Mingrelia, Russia's candidate, whose name had been submitted by the Porte, was categorically vetoed by Stambuloff.

Austria, meanwhile, though the most directly

interested of the Powers, had observed an expectant attitude, as Count Kalnoky cherished the hope that Russia, if left to herself, would end by estranging Bulgaria for all time. Her Majesty's Government, on the other hand, were seriously preoccupied by the prospect of an eventual Russian advance on Constantinople, and Sir Augustus Paget was consequently instructed to sound the Austrian Government as to the steps to be taken to avert the danger of Bulgaria's falling completely under Russian influence and to urge the importance of the two Governments acting in concert. Count Kalnoky received these overtures in a friendly spirit, but contended that so far there had been no violation of the international status of Bulgaria, and that only when this happened would the time for intervention have arrived. Her Majesty's Government replied by citing all the illegal acts committed by General Kaulbars in support of their view that the time had already come for united European action.

Count Kalnoky, however, did not place sufficient confidence in the material support, which he was likely to receive from Great Britain, to commit himself to a policy of active intervention; and, though both Governments acknowledged the identity of their interests, no regular understanding was arrived at. He was, nevertheless, somewhat reassured by Lord Salisbury's statement at the Guildhall Banquet on November 9, that, if British interests were directly threatened, Great Britain would know how to defend them with her own right arm, and that in questions in which she was only indirectly interested the attitude adopted by Austria would largely contribute to shape the policy of Her Majesty's Government. Fortunately

about this time the situation was somewhat eased by Kaulbars breaking off diplomatic relations with the Bulgarian Government; and the regents profited by his departure to send a delegation to the various capitals with a view to ending the interregnum. On their arrival at Vienna, Prince Ferdinand of Coburg, on his own initiative and prompted by motives of personal ambition, offered himself as a candidate for the vacant throne, though neither the Emperor nor Count Kalnoky approved of his doing so. The latter, indeed, remarked in the course of a private conversation that the Prince had too much the airs and manners of a *vieille cocotte* to make a suitable successor to Prince Alexander.

Prince Ferdinand had at first attached a condition to his acceptance of the princely crown that was almost equivalent to a refusal, namely, that he should be confirmed by the Porte and approved by the Powers, and it was only six months later, in July, 1887, that he was formally elected Prince of Bulgaria. Russia objected to his election as being an infraction of Article III of the Treaty of Berlin, which stipulated that the Prince should be "freely elected"; whereas, according to her contention, he had been elected under the dictation and tyranny of the regency, itself an illegal body, by an assembly illegally constituted, owing to the presence in it of deputies from Eastern Roumelia. Count Kalnoky's attitude was very similar to that of Her Majesty's Government. He considered that the Grand Sobranje had acted strictly within its legal rights, but regretted that its choice had not fallen on a better candidate. A few days before Prince Ferdinand's departure for Sofia he urged him to adhere to his original

intention and to await the assent of the Powers, pointing out that, if he went without that assent, he would be acting the part of an adventurer and would enjoy no legal status. Germany's attitude was one of theoretical support of Russia. In Prince Bismarck's opinion it was desirable that there should be an understanding between Austria and Russia as to their respective spheres of influence in the Balkans, and that, while the former should be predominant in Serbia, the latter should be allowed to regain in Bulgaria the position which she had held prior to 1885. His one object was to deprive Russia of any pretext of ill-humour against Germany, and he held that, considering the innumerable mistakes which Russia had made in the political handling of the Bulgarian question, the larger the scope allowed her for action the more certain would she be to dig her own grave. The keynote to his policy lay in his conviction that France would never attack Germany unless the latter was at war with Russia, and he was therefore prepared to go all lengths to maintain friendly relations with the latter country. He told Count Kalnoky, however, that he need not *prendre au sérieux* such theoretical support as he (Prince Bismarck) might give to any proposals put forward by Russia, as his only object was to keep on good terms with her, while he was confident that no Russian proposal would ever materialize if seriously opposed by Austria, Great Britain and Italy. His confidence in the energetic action of those Powers was, nevertheless, not sufficient to tempt him to run the risk of offending Russia.

CHAPTER III

1888—1900

IN the summer of 1888 I exchanged into the Foreign Office and worked there till the end of the following year, when I was transferred to Berne, and at the end of 1892 I was promoted Secretary of Legation and offered the post of *chargé d'affaires* at Coburg. A hitch, however, occurred with regard to my appointment, as for reasons connected with the past life of the then Duke, the Queen objected to a married man being sent to Coburg. While the question was still under discussion between Her Majesty and the Foreign Office the sudden death of our Minister at Darmstadt provided a way out of the dilemma, and I was appointed to Darmstadt with the rank of *chargé d'affaires*.

Darmstadt was in every respect a more desirable post, as, owing to its central position and to its proximity to Frankfurt and Homburg, one could keep in touch with the outside world and extend the circle of one's acquaintances beyond the confines of what was virtually but a small garrison town. In spite, however, of its limited social resources Darmstadt as a residence had much to commend it. One could ride for miles on end in the surrounding woods; one could, at no great distance, get excellent shooting of almost every kind of game—stags, roebucks, wild boar, pheasants, partridges, hares, and even capercailzie; and when not

otherwise engaged one could spend one's evenings at the Court theatre, where plays and operas were given on alternate nights. The theatre, which was largely subsidized by the Grand Duke, was of a very high order, and it was there that I learned to appreciate and to understand Goethe's *Faust*. It was admirably put on the stage and admirably acted, the whole representation being extended over three nights, the first concluding with the scene in the *Hexen Küche*, the second being devoted to Gretchen's tragic love story, and the third comprising the whole of the second part in an abridged form. The social life, too, which centred round the Court was pleasant enough with its constant little dinners and informal dances; but what I look back to with the most pleasure were the days which I spent with my friend, Baron Max von Heyl, partridge shooting near Worms and stalking deer and chamois in the Tyrol.

Though, after the marriage of Princess Alice of Hesse to the Emperor of Russia, Darmstadt acquired a certain political importance in consequence of the frequent visits of their Russian Majesties, it was only what is commonly termed a "family post." Both the Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess were the grandchildren of Queen Victoria, the former through his mother, the Princess Alice, and the latter through her father, the Duke of Edinburgh and Coburg. The Queen, who had arranged this marriage, took a lively interest in all that concerned them, and during the six years which I passed at Darmstadt I had the privilege of being in direct correspondence with Her Majesty and of being honoured, together with my wife, with invitations to Windsor and Osborne whenever we

were in England. There was, however, a *revers de la médaille* that rendered my position far from an easy one. The Grand Duke and Grand Duchess, like most young married couples, no matter what their station in life, liked to go their own way, and were apt to leave undone many things which they ought to have done, and to do many things which they had better, perhaps, have left undone. Whenever anything of this kind happened, and more especially when they had omitted to answer letters or to pay befitting attentions to any of their elderly relatives who happened to be in their neighbourhood, the onus of remonstrating with them invariably fell on my shoulders. I was, moreover, expected to keep the Queen fully informed of all their doings and misdoings—a very invidious task, in view of the great kindness which their Royal Highnesses constantly showed us and of the terms of intimate friendship on which they admitted us into their family circle. We were constantly invited to dine with them at the palace and to stop with them for weeks on end at their summer residence at Wolfsgarten, while they frequently honoured us with their presence at dinner.

Unfortunately their marriage, on account of incompatibility of character and temperament, did not prove a happy one, and as they gradually drifted apart it was no easy matter for my wife and me to try and smooth over difficulties and to prevent the complete separation which took place shortly after our leaving Darmstadt. We were both devoted to the Grand Duchess, who, in addition to the gift of beauty, had a wonderful personal charm and a way of saying things that was most attractive; and, as reason and right were on her side, she had our fullest sympathies. But this did not prevent

my being perfectly frank and outspoken in the advice which I tendered, and as she realized that I only did this in her own interest she never resented it, and regarded me, as she said on one occasion, as "My kind schoolmaster."

During the summer months Homburg, with its cosmopolitan crowd of water-drinkers, was a never-failing resource, as one was sure to find among them friends and acquaintances from almost every country in Europe. It was at Homburg that I had the privilege of being brought into close relations with the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VII), and it was thanks to His Royal Highness's kindness in representing to the Queen that my chances of advancement in the service would be seriously prejudiced were she to keep me indefinitely at Darmstadt that she eventually consented to my being given another post. The Empress Frederick, whose beautiful *schloss* at Cronberg was only a few miles distant from Homburg, was also most kind to us and often invited us to stay with her. Those visits were always as interesting as they were delightful. In the morning I generally rode with Her Majesty, and in the afternoon we all took long drives and walks among the Taunus Hills.

In the course of our conversations the Empress would often unburden herself on the subject of the anti-British feeling in Germany and of the difficulties with which she was consequently beset. As the mother of the future Queen of Greece she was naturally intensely interested in the critical situation in which that country found itself placed after the Turkish War, and I used sometimes to serve as the channel through which Her Majesty communicated her views on this question to

Queen Victoria. But what interested me most was when the Empress, who was extremely well read, turned her conversation on to literary subjects and discussed the respective merits of some of the great English and German poets. One day, however, her memory played her false and she made a slip which rather embarrassed me. I had happened to quote some lines from the "Ancient Mariner," and Her Majesty at once said: "Oh yes. I remember them quite well. They are from Longfellow's 'Ancient Mariner.'" Though it was hardly a courtier-like proceeding to contradict her, I could not help saying: "Your Majesty, I think, means Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner.'" A somewhat heated argument followed that ended in a drawn battle, as neither of us would admit that the other was right. Our last visit to Cronberg was saddened by the knowledge of the fatal illness to which the Empress succumbed in the following year, but the courage and patience with which she bore her sufferings did but enhance the admiration and respectful sympathy which I had always entertained for Her Majesty.

Among the many Royal personages, whom we frequently met during our visits to Cronberg, were the Duke and Duchess of Sparta (afterwards King and Queen of Greece) and Prince and Princess Frederick Charles of Hesse. Princess Frederick Charles, who, like the Duchess of Sparta, was a daughter of the Empress Frederick, had married a younger brother of the Landgraf of Hesse, and the latter's name recalls to my mind an incident which is typical of the mentality of some Germans. The Prince of Wales had charged me with the mission of representing him

at the christening of one of the Princess's children, of whom His Royal Highness was the godfather, and I accordingly proceeded on the appointed day to the Landgraf's *schloss*, where the ceremony was to take place. Some forty persons were present at the luncheon that followed the christening, and knowing how punctilious Germans are, I was careful, as I thought, to get presented to all of them. After luncheon the Landgraf engaged me in conversation and finally asked me whether I liked shooting. On my replying in the affirmative he said: "Then come and shoot pheasants here in December," without, however, fixing any particular day. As it happened, I had already arranged to go home on leave at the end of November, and I was trying to explain this, with many expressions of my regret, when he turned his back on me, saying: "You may go to h——." I was naturally somewhat taken aback, and as I saw a gentleman standing near me, whom I took for his equerry, I went up to him in order to explain and expostulate. As bad luck would have it, not only was this gentleman not his equerry, but he was also the one person out of the whole company to whom, by some oversight, I had not been presented. After looking me up and down, he interrupted my explanations by frigidly remarking: "Sir, in Germany it is customary that a gentleman does not speak to another gentleman without first being presented to him by a third gentleman." He then also turned his back on me. I was quite dumbfounded by this lesson in German manners, when the Princess's lady-in-waiting came up to me and said: "Mr. Buchanan, I have by chance overheard what passed in both your conversations, and all that I can say is that

I am ashamed of my countrymen." The Princess afterwards sent for me and apologized in the most charming way for what had happened.

The Court of Carlsruhe, to which I was also accredited, was in all respects the direct opposite of that of Darmstadt. While, in the latter, etiquette was more honoured in the breach than in the observance, it was in the former rigidly enforced and reduced almost to a fine art. When invited to luncheon with the Grand Ducal family, one had to don an evening coat, with a black tie; and on the occasion of the celebration of the Grand Duke's seventieth birthday I remember beginning the day at eight o'clock in the morning in my blue dress coat, with brass buttons, and only discarding it at seven o'clock in the evening in favour of my full uniform. But the most trying ordeals were the interminable circles which followed a dinner at the palace, when one had to stand for two or three hours while the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess went the round of their guests. Nor was one always left in peace when one got to one's hotel, for on one occasion I was woke at eight o'clock by a royal lackey knocking at my bedroom door to tell me that, as I was no doubt going to the English church service at ten-thirty, the Grand Duchess had given orders for me to be shown over an adjoining hospital at ten o'clock; and as this amounted to a royal command, I had no choice but to submit.

If ever lambent dullness played around a Court, it was surely round that of Carlsruhe, and the town itself reflected the dullness of the Court.

Matters were not improved by the fact that during the concluding years of the nineteenth century, more especially after the outbreak of our war in South Africa,

public feeling throughout Germany was strongly anti-British, and one was constantly exposed to having unpleasant things said about one's country. The Grand Duke of Baden was himself far too much of a gentleman ever to do this. A grand seigneur of the old school, he was courtesy itself; and if in the course of our conversations he alluded to the somewhat strained relations between Germany and Great Britain, he spoke rather in sorrow than in anger, and attributed our misunderstanding to the irresponsible language of the British and German Press. He even on one occasion put forward the somewhat fantastic suggestion that, in order to render the Press less potent for evil, the Powers should agree not to allow themselves to be influenced by what the Press of foreign countries might say about international questions, and not to use their own Press as the channel for their official utterances on such questions. He was, unfortunately, possessed with the idea that the important position secured by Great Britain in the world was due to the long-sighted and Machiavellian policy pursued by successive British Governments. Nor did he take me seriously when I remarked that His Royal Highness was paying our diplomacy an unmerited compliment, for British Governments were not, as a general rule, in the habit of looking far ahead. They rather, I added, adapted their policy to the requirements of the moment, and their practice of muddling through as best they could had on the whole proved most successful.

The Grand Duchess, who was a daughter of the old Emperor William, was, on the other hand, far less considerate and gave free expression to her feelings.

As an ultra-German she held that Germany could do no wrong and that, consequently, Great Britain was entirely to blame if the relations between the two Governments were not so good as they should be. It was in vain that I tried to persuade her that there might be faults on both sides and that, if our two countries were to remain friends, they must each show due consideration for the other's national interests. On one occasion—either immediately before or immediately after the outbreak of the Boer War—she lectured me before the whole Court and marked her displeasure by not giving me her hand to kiss, as was usual at such an official reception.

I happened shortly afterwards, on going on leave to England, to be invited to Osborne for a couple of nights, and to be placed at dinner one off the Queen, when, much to my surprise, Her Majesty, who had been talking of the anti-British feeling in Germany, turned to me and said: "The dear Grand Duchess of Baden is the only friend whom we have in Germany." I ventured to reply that if Her Royal Highness had represented herself as our friend she had been careful to mask her true feelings; and I then proceeded to tell Her Majesty of my recent visit to Carlsruhe and how the Grand Duchess had gone out of her way to let me know that she fully shared the views then prevalent in Germany with regard to Great Britain. The Queen was quite taken aback at hearing this, and on my going on to describe how, both at Carlsruhe and Darmstadt, the crowds in the streets gloated over the telegrams announcing our reverses, which were posted up in the windows of the post office, Her Majesty said: "We shall not forget."

In July, 1898, Lord Salisbury offered me the post of British agent on the Venezuelan Arbitration Tribunal, that had become vacant by Michael Herbert's appointment as Ambassador to Washington. As it was the Queen's wish that I should nevertheless continue to act as *chargé d'affaires* at Darmstadt, I paid a flying visit to London, in order to settle how I could best combine the discharge of the duties of my new post with those of my old one. It was characteristic of Her Majesty's thoughtfulness that, knowing how short my stay in England was to be, she should have sent the following telegram through the Foreign Office: "The Queen wishes Mr. Buchanan to come to Osborne any day he likes." Sovereigns are not, as a rule, in the habit of showing such consideration for the convenience of one of their subjects, more especially when that subject happens to be but a junior member of the diplomatic service; but, judging by my personal experience, no Sovereign was ever more thoughtful for others or more grateful for the smallest service rendered than was Queen Victoria.

I had been fortunate enough from the outset to win Her Majesty's confidence. After the first rather alarming interview, when, on my appointment to Darmstadt, I had to wait in the gallery at Osborne for Her Majesty to pass on her way to dinner and to fall on one knee and kiss her hand, I was never again afraid of her. I fell at once under the charm of her wonderful smile, and was always perfectly natural and frank in all my conversations with her. I nearly always found the Queen very easy to talk to and easily amused. On my telling her once that by a curious coincidence not only was November 25 the common birthday of the

Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Hesse, but mine as well, Her Majesty asked: "And were you born in the same year as they were?" I replied, with a smile, that that was an honour to which I could not aspire, as I was, unfortunately, old enough to be the Grand Duke's father. "How very stupid of me!" replied the Queen, laughing heartily at her mistake. There were, however, occasions when it was not so easy for me to reply to Her Majesty's questions with regard to affairs at Darmstadt. I remember more especially how embarrassed I was at a long audience, which I had during a Saturday to Monday visit to Windsor early in 1898, when I could no longer conceal from Her Majesty the growing tension in the relations of the Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess. After listening to what I had to tell her the Queen remarked: "I got up that marriage. I will never try to marry anyone again," and then proceeded to ply me with questions. When, however, I ventured to say that I had always tried to do my duty both by Her Majesty and by the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess, and that I trusted that she would understand how difficult it was for me, after being confided in by their Royal Highnesses, to betray their confidence by repeating what they had told me, Her Majesty at once said: "I quite understand, and I am very grateful." Both my wife and I had several further conversations with the Queen during this visit, and before leaving I received a charming letter from Her Majesty, enclosing two Jubilee Medals, which "She hopes they will accept as a mark of her gratitude for their great kindness to her grandchildren."

The last time that I saw the Queen was at Balmoral

in October, 1900, on my relinquishing my appointment as *chargé d'affaires* at Darmstadt, when Her Majesty conferred on me the C.V.O.—a decoration which at that time was but rarely given. A few months later the great Queen, who had always inspired me with feelings of veneration and devotion, as well as of intense gratitude for the kindness and consideration which she had constantly shown me, entered into her rest.

CHAPTER IV

1888—1903

FEW people, I imagine, now remember anything about our dispute with Venezuela respecting the boundary between her territory and that of the British Colony of Guiana, though it constituted at that time one of the burning questions of the day. It derived its importance from the fact that in 1895 President Cleveland had, in a message to Congress, espoused the cause of Venezuela, with the result that the question threatened to embroil our relations with the United States of America. It was to avoid this danger that, after prolonged negotiations, a treaty was signed at Washington in February, 1897, between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Venezuela, under which the question of the territory in dispute was to be submitted to arbitration.

When in July, 1898, I took up my appointment as British Agent to the Arbitration Tribunal, the two contracting parties had already exchanged their cases and counter cases; and at the end of the year the respective arguments, which summed up the documentary evidence, were also exchanged. After a preliminary meeting held early in the New Year to settle certain questions with regard to procedure, the tribunal assembled at Paris on June 15, 1899. The court was composed of two British arbitrators (Lord Chief Jus-

tice Russell and Lord Justice Henn Collins) and of two American judges (the Hon. Melville Webster Fuller, Chief Justice of the United States, and the Hon. David Brewer, a Justice of the Supreme Court), with the well-known Russian jurist, M. de Martens, as president. The leading counsel on our side were the Attorney-General, Sir Richard Webster (afterwards Lord Alverstone and Lord Chief Justice) and Sir Robert Reid (afterwards Lord Loreburn and Lord Chancellor), assisted by the present Lord Askwith and the present Mr. Justice Rowlatt, while Venezuela was represented by General Harrison (an ex-President of the United States) and other eminent American lawyers.

The history of the territory in dispute went back as far as the end of the sixteenth century. As heir to Spain, Venezuela claimed the whole territory between the Orinoco and the left bank of the Essequibo—a claim which we contested on the ground that the greater part of that territory had for more than two centuries been successively under the control of the Dutch and British, and that since our formal occupation of the colony in 1814 it was by Great Britain and not by Venezuela that it had been developed. Counsel for Venezuela further contended that though, according to Article 4 of the Treaty of Washington, adverse holding or prescription legalized a title, that rule had been intended to apply to the fifty years prior to 1814 and not to the fifty years immediately preceding the signature of the treaty. This would have constituted such a serious modification of the conditions on which Her Majesty's Government had consented to arbitration that, had the arbitrators accepted the American interpretation of the article in

question, we should have refused to proceed with the arbitration.

The Attorney-General, who was the first to address the court, presented the British case in a masterly speech that occupied thirteen sittings, marshalling all the facts of our case with extraordinary ability. He made the mistake, however, of dealing with it too much in detail and, as I ventured to remark at the time, he pulled down our house in order to show of what good bricks it had been built. This gave counsel for Venezuela the opportunity of seizing on the weak points in our argument and of demonstrating the inferior quality of some of our boasted bricks. When Sir Robert Reid rose to reply to two of the counsel for Venezuela, who had spoken for twenty-two days, the outlook was by no means promising; but, in a short and brilliant speech, he raised the discussion to a higher level and concentrated into it the very essence of the British case. He succeeded, moreover, in throwing ridicule on the plea of the prior right of Spain that formed the corner stone of the Venezuelan argument, and in drawing a telling contrast between the action of the Spaniards and the Venezuelans on the one hand and of the Dutch and the British on the other. Mr. Askwith next spoke and was followed by General Tracy on behalf of Venezuela. The Attorney-General then summed up for Great Britain, while General Harrison brought the oral argument to a close with a speech which, despite its force and eloquence, failed to make any serious impression on the court. The absence, indeed, of any affirmative evidence forced the General to found the Venezuelan case almost entirely on the contention that, as successor to Spain, Venezuela was

vested with a prior and paramount title to the territory in dispute and to supplement this argument with criticisms of the British case.

Had the case been tried by an impartial court of justice, that would have decided it in the light of the evidence laid before it, the whole of the territory in dispute would in all probability have been awarded us. As it was, the boundary line fixed by the award did not entail the sacrifice of any serious British interests, though the mouth of the Barima was not left, as we had hoped, in the absolute possession of Great Britain. But with an arbitral tribunal, in which the litigant parties are represented by arbitrators appointed by themselves, the neutral president is naturally tempted to find some compromise that will secure a unanimous decision. Such unanimity had been lacking in all the arbitral awards that had been delivered between that on the Alabama claims in 1873 and that on the Behring Sea Fisheries some twenty years later, and Monsieur de Martens had special reasons for desiring to break through this rule in the case of the Venezuelan arbitration. The first Peace Conference, convoked on the initiative of the Emperor Nicholas, had met at the Hague in the month of July, and he was anxious to second his Sovereign's efforts in the cause of peace by securing a unanimous award that would go far to encourage other States to submit their differences to arbitration. Such a desire was laudable in itself, but the means which he employed to give effect to it were not above criticism. Having decided in his own mind on a boundary line that would constitute a fair compromise between the conflicting claims of the parties to the dispute, he approached their respective arbitrators

in turn, and intimated that if either side declined to accept it he would give his casting vote in favour of the opponent's extreme claim.

The oral argument had occupied fifty-four sittings of the court, and, if the proceedings were unduly prolonged, the responsibility lay with the counsel for Venezuela, who had spoken for ten days more, than with our counsel. Though the most cordial personal relations were maintained throughout, there were, as was but natural, many sharp passages of arms between the opposing counsel. The Attorney-General, in spite of his able conduct of the case, did not like facing a difficult situation, and would always try to get round it by returning an evasive answer to any awkward question that was addressed to him. These tactics so annoyed General Harrison that on one occasion he rose and caused considerable amusement in court by remarking: "The Attorney-General reminds me of a large bird that has alighted on a branch too weak to hold him, so he spreads out his wings and goes flap, flap with them to keep himself in position." The General at the same time was moving his arms up and down like a bird's wings, and every time the Attorney-General tried to burke a question he quietly rose and repeated this pantomimic action.

It was with some diffidence that I had accepted the post as agent, as, apart from the novelty of the work, the position of an agent on a big arbitration case is rather an anomalous one unless he is prepared to be a mere cipher. The preparation and the conduct of the case were naturally in the hands of the great lawyers employed on it, and, though I took part in all their discussions, my rôle was rather to keep the Government

informed of the result of their deliberations and of the line of argument which it was proposed to adopt. The Attorney-General, however, was always ready to listen to anything which I had to say, and when, as sometimes happened, I was not in entire agreement with him on some important question, I did not hesitate to say so, and on more than one occasion I succeeded in carrying my point. During the sittings of the court at Paris our respective positions were never quite clearly defined. While the Attorney-General was in the habit of speaking of me as " my agent," Lord Justice Collins resented his dubbing the Government's representative *his* agent, and urged me to retort by referring to " my Attorney-General "—a piece of advice which I naturally did not follow.

Besides having to arrange for the housing of all the members of the British delegation at Paris, I had to settle with the Treasury the amount of their salaries and subsistence allowances. This was rather an ungrateful task, as we are all inclined to rate our services at a somewhat higher figure than the Government attaches to them; but by making graceful concessions to the Treasury in minor matters I generally succeeded in getting what I wanted. To quote but one instance. The Lord Chief Justice protested that five guineas a day was not sufficient to enable him to live in Paris in a style befitting his high office, and pressed me to raise his own subsistence allowance to six guineas and that of his clerk from twenty-five shillings to thirty shillings. In submitting his request to the Treasury I said that I considered that Lord Russell's claim reasonable, but that I could not conscientiously support his request for an extra five shillings for his clerk. The Treasury

thereupon not only granted his lordship the six guineas which he had asked for, but remarked, much to my amusement, that it was refreshing to deal with someone like myself who had the public's interest at heart. The clerk, however, did not suffer in the end, as on the conclusion of the arbitration I secured for him a bonus of fifty pounds.

My most difficult task at Paris was preparing for the Foreign Office a report of each successive sitting of the court, as, in such a lengthy and complicated case, it was no easy matter to summarize in a despatch the speeches of counsel and to appraise the value of their respective arguments. The labour which I bestowed on these reports was, however, amply rewarded by the Government's cordial appreciation of my services. I was given the C.B. and offered the choice of a small Legation or the post of counsellor of embassy. As I was anxious to get back to political work I opted for the latter, and at the end of 1900 was appointed to Rome, where Lord Currie was then our ambassador. During four out of the eleven months I spent there I was in charge of the embassy; but Rome in those days was a very easy post. Political interest centred round the Cretan question, which was dealt with in a conference of the representatives of the Powers more immediately interested under the presidency of the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Signor Prinetti. *Tempora mutantur*—and in these days of storm and stress one looks back with envy to the time when such a question as the Government of Crete was one of our chief preoccupations.

In the autumn of 1901 I was transferred to the embassy at Berlin, the post which I had originally asked for. I was anxious to go there not only because Frank

Lascelles, our ambassador, was a very old friend, but because Berlin was at that particular moment the most important of all our embassies. All who have read Baron Eckhartstein's remarkable revelations will remember how the repeated attempts made by our Government to come to an understanding and to conclude some sort of defensive alliance with Germany had been frustrated by the folly and insincerity of the Anglophobe clique in the Wilhelmstrasse. Great Britain was then at the parting of the ways, as the time had come when it was impossible for her to pursue any longer her policy of splendid isolation. She had either to range herself on the side of the Triple Alliance or to throw in her lot with France and Russia. During the Boer War Anglo-German relations had been strained almost to the breaking point by such incidents as the holding up and searching of the German steamers *Bundesrath*, *General* and *Hertzog;* and, while the excitement produced by these incidents in Germany was intense, the threatening attitude adopted by the Imperial Government had provoked a counter-irritation in official circles in London. In spite of this, however, the idea of a defensive arrangement with Germany was not altogether abandoned by His Majesty's Government, and as late as the spring of 1901 the question was once more broached by Lord Lansdowne. The reception, however, accorded to this tentative proposal by the Wilhelmstrasse was not encouraging, and the negotiations which followed only served to convince our Government that it was hopeless to look on Germany as a possible ally.

Shortly after my arrival in Berlin in October, 1901, Sir Frank went on leave, and I was consequently left

in charge of the embassy. It was a moment of acute tension. In the Press calumnies of every description were being circulated respecting the conduct of our troops in South Africa, while in the Reichstag the latter were being denounced as mercenaries and accused of fighting behind a screen of women and children. In a speech which he delivered at the end of October repudiating these unfounded charges, Mr. Chamberlain cited incidents in the War of 1870 which were not to the credit of the German army. These counter-charges did but add fuel to the flames and provoked a fresh anti-British campaign in the Reichstag, to which Count Bülow, who had recently succeeded Prince Hohenlohe as Chancellor, contributed a speech criticizing Mr. Chamberlain in the strongest terms.

A *chargé d'affaires* has but few opportunities of seeing so exalted a personage as the Imperial Chancellor; but Count Bülow, to whom I had been recommended by my friend and colleague at Rome, Baron Jagow, was good enough to ask me to dine, and I took advantage of a conversation which I had with him after dinner to refer to the recent debates in the Reichstag. I was, I proceeded to say, prepared to admit that, as a fighting force, the British army did not bear comparison with the German army. The navy was our first line of defence, and our army was, relatively speaking, a small one; but this fact did not prevent our being proud both of it and its great traditions. We resented its being treated as an army of mercenaries, and we resented still more the calumnious charges that had been made against it in the Reichstag. Men who volunteered for active service, men who were ready of their own free will to lay down

their lives for their king and country, were, in my opinion, on a higher plane than men who were forced to do so under a system of obligatory service. His Excellency, I was convinced, did not himself give credence to the stories which had been told about our troops in the Reichstag. I would therefore appeal to him, in the interest of the maintenance of good relations between our two countries, to intervene in the debate and to put matters right by explaining that the Reichstag had been misinformed as to the conduct of our troops. Count Bülow admitted that he did not personally credit the truth of these stories, and spoke with his characteristic charm and courtesy. But he was not a strong enough man to swim against the current, so he turned a deaf ear to my appeal, declaring that he could not interfere with the Reichstag and that it was impossible for him to say anything.

In December, 1901, the Marquis Ito arrived in Berlin on his way to London, and, as Japan was still hesitating between an alliance with Russia and an alliance with Great Britain, I was naturally anxious to ascertain what had passed between him and Count Witte during his stay at St. Petersburg. I had known the Marquis when I was a secretary at our Legation at Tokio in 1880, and, on renewing acquaintance with him at a party at the Japanese Legation, I tried to draw him by turning the conversation on to the subject of his journey. Japanese statesmen, however, are never very communicative. The Marquis, who had throughout our conversation maintained an attitude of studied reserve, declined to be drawn and eventually silenced me with the crushing remark: "I

have had a most interesting journey, but I never allowed myself to be interviewed."

The Anglo-Japanese Treaty, which was signed some six weeks later, and the final abandonment of the idea of any defensive alliance with Germany, paved the way for the understanding with France which was to follow two years later. This new trend in British foreign policy did not help to improve our relations with Germany, and, though ostensibly normal and friendly, those relations became marked by a growing feeling of mutual distrust. Apart from the question of her naval programme, that constituted a direct challenge to our supremacy on the seas, repeated friction was caused by Germany's provocative action in China. This was more especially the case in the autumn of 1902, when I was in charge of the embassy, and I remember being hurried back from a flying visit to London, where I had gone in order to attend my wife's operation for appendicitis—an operation of so serious a character that her life was only saved by Sir Frederick Treves' consummate skill—in order to "rub in" the very bad impression which some recent step, taken by Germany on the Yangtse, had made on His Majesty's Government. I did so with such effect that the Foreign Secretary, Baron von Richthofen, who as a rule was the most courteous of men, lost all control of his temper and gave vent to his feelings in a torrent of angry words that did not serve any useful purpose. On reading the telegram in which I had reported this heated conversation King Edward was good enough to commend my outspoken language and to tell Sir Frank, who happened to be staying at Sandringham, that he had got a very good *locum-tenens*.

Of all my posts Berlin, despite its political interest, was the one which I liked the least, and as I had been sent there at my own special request, I sometimes felt, with Charles Kingsley, that I had been "cursed with the burden of an answered prayer." As a town it was unattractive and, except for a small circle of intimate friends who showed us much kindness, the social life, with its tedious afternoon receptions and stiff official dinners, was boring in the extreme. I was therefore not sorry to leave it on being appointed at the end of 1903 agent and consul-general at Sofia with the personal rank of Minister.

CHAPTER V

1887–1904

REVIEW OF PRINCE FERDINAND'S REIGN

ON August 14, 1887, Prince Ferdinand had taken the oath before the Grand Sobranje at Tirnovo, the ancient Bulgarian capital, and in a proclamation issued on the same day had informed "our free people" that he had mounted the throne of the glorious Bulgarian Tsars. The circumstances under which he had been elected have been already explained, and I propose in the present chapter to give a brief sketch of his career as a Balkan prince down to the date of my arrival at Sofia early in 1904.

For the first seven years he reigned and Stambuloff governed, and it was only after the fall of his all-powerful Minister in 1894 that he took the reins of power into his own hands. The first of these two periods was marked by the open hostility of Russia, by the ever-present danger of a Russian occupation, and by a succession of plots against his life. With his recognition in 1896 and the consequent resumption of diplomatic relations, Russia abandoned her openly hostile attitude, and endeavoured to regain by more insidious means the position which she had lost by her own folly. One feature there was common to both periods—on the one hand, the wounded pride of Russia claiming, by virtue of her sacrifices in the war of liberation, the right to direct the course of Bulgarian policy

into her own channels; and, on the other, a young, virile and democratic nation struggling to maintain its independence and determined to shape its own destinies without the interference of any foreign Power. Prince Ferdinand was from the first anxious to reconcile these conflicting forces, as he was persuaded that neither Bulgaria nor her ruler could exist in the long run without the good will of Russia. He had, even before proceeding to Sofia, made advances to her through the Russian ambassador in Vienna, but without success. Russia was implacable, and twice in the next six months she endeavoured to make the Porte insist on his vacating the throne of which he had taken illegal possession.

Fortunately for Prince Ferdinand, Great Britain, Austria and Italy were alive to the danger of the establishment of a Panslavist régime in Bulgaria, and they not only discouraged the Sultan from taking a course that might have led to the employment of force by either Russia or Turkey, but they even empowered their representatives at Sofia to enter into private and unofficial relations with him. Though he thus continued to reign as a *de facto* Sovereign, with the unofficial support of the so-called friendly Powers, his position was long a precarious one. The army had never really transferred its allegiance to him, and the spring of 1890 was marked by the discovery of an extensive military conspiracy to dethrone him. The doubtful loyalty of the army made Stambuloff anxious to secure the Prince's recognition by the Sultan, but, in the face of Russia's opposition, his overtures at Constantinople met with no response. He did, however, succeed in obtaining *berats* for the appointment of Bulgarian bishops to the sees of Ochrida, Uskub,

Veles and Nevrokop. He was the one strong man on whom the whole situation depended, and he dictated the Government's policy. While not hesitating when occasion demanded it to work on the Sultan's fears by means of veiled threats, he pursued a conciliatory policy. He restricted his demands to that measure of autonomy, to which Macedonia was entitled under the Treaty of Berlin, in the conviction that, were that autonomy once granted, the union of Macedonia with Bulgaria would follow as naturally and as irresistibly as the union with Eastern Roumelia.

Meanwhile the risk of assassination, to which the Prince might at any time be exposed in consequence of the plots of the Russophil party, rendered it more than ever desirable that he should marry and found a dynasty. In 1892 negotiations were opened with the Duke of Parma for the hand of his daughter, Princess Marie Louise. As the Duke insisted that the children of the marriage should be brought up in the Catholic religion, Stambuloff undertook to secure the revision of Article 32 of the Constitution, according to which the heir to the throne had to belong to the Orthodox religion. Russia at once entered a protest against a step which she held to be contrary to the religious sentiments of the Bulgarian people. In the country itself the idea was unpopular; but so indispensable did Stambuloff consider it for the Prince's marriage that, taking all the odium of the measure on his own shoulders, he forced its adoption on the Sobranje. Prince Ferdinand's marriage was celebrated in the spring of 1893, and, followed as it was at the close of that year by the death of his only rival, Prince Alexander, greatly strengthened his position. It at

the same time rendered him impatient of the tutelage of a man who could brook no opposition to his will, even from his own Sovereign. Feeling that he was now strong enough to stand alone, he determined to get rid of a Minister whom he regarded as the chief obstacle to his official recognition by the Powers. The tension that had so long existed between them was brought to a climax by an incident connected with the resignation of the Minister of War, and Stambuloff tendered his resignation, which was at once accepted.

The fall of Stambuloff marked a turning point in the constitutional history of Bulgaria and inaugurated an era of personal government by the Prince, more especially in the domain of foreign affairs. He was succeeded by M. Stoiloff, the leader of the Conservative party, as head of a coalition government; but the Prince at once made it clear that he intended to be his own Foreign Minister. One of his first steps was to pave the way for a *rapprochement* with Russia by an exchange of telegrams with the Emperor Nicholas on the occasion of the death of the Emperor Alexander III in November, 1894, and by sending a deputation, under the Archbishop Clement, to St. Petersburg in the following July to place a wreath on the late Emperor's tomb. The reception accorded to the deputation was distinctly cool, and the only result obtained was an intimation to the effect that the admission of Prince Boris into the Orthodox Church would be agreeable to the Emperor and that a request for the despatch of a Russian agent to Sofia would be favourably entertained. But while he was thus endeavouring to regain the good will of Russia, his treatment of Stambuloff lost him the sympathy formerly felt for Bulgaria at Vienna and in

London. Though repeatedly warned of the danger to which that statesman's life was exposed, the Prince's Government had not only taken no measures for his protection, but had even refused him permission to go to Carlsbad, and the cynical indifference which they displayed after his assassination in July, 1895, laid them open to the charge of being morally, if not directly, responsible for his murder.

Another cause of difference between the Western Powers and Bulgaria was the attitude of tolerance, and even of actual encouragement, which the latter Government had, since Stambuloff's fall, adopted towards the insurrectionary Bulgarian movement in Macedonia. That movement, in contradistinction to those of the Greeks and Serbs, was essentially Macedonian in its origin. It was a protest against the geographical limitations placed by the Treaty of Berlin on the national aspirations, which had been awakened not only by the Treaty of San Stefano, but also by the recommendations of the conference held at Constantinople on the eve of the Russo-Turkish War. In the *Projet du Règlement pour le Bulgarie* Europe had recognized the ethnographical claims of the Bulgarian race as comprising the three northern kazas of the Adrianople vilayet, the principality as afterwards constituted by the Treaty of Berlin, the Sanjaks of Uskub, Monastir (with the exception of its two southern kazas), the three northern kazas of Serres, and the kazas of Strumnitza and Kastoria. The publication of the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin was immediately followed by two ineffectual risings in the valley of the Struma, and in 1880 a conspiracy of a more ambitious character was discovered at Ochrida.

No further risings were attempted for more than a decade, though the brigand bands, which had always existed in Macedonia, showed occasional signs of activity. The movement, however, did but slumber, and the idea of an eventual, if distant, emancipation was kept alive by the steady stream of emigration which soon set in towards the principality. The national sentiment, moreover, had been stimulated by the spread of the influence of the Exarchist Church. Prior to 1870 the Patriarchate had been supreme in all ecclesiastical and scholastic matters, while politically it had been a potent instrument of Hellenization. Since the last vestige of a Bulgarian Church had disappeared with the suppression in 1767 of the see of Ochrida, all Orthodox Christians had necessarily been Patriarchists, and allegiance to the Patriarchate was reputed, though quite erroneously, to carry with it the implication of Greek nationality. By the Firman of 1870, however, the Exarchate had acquired the right to appoint bishops to certain specified dioceses as far south as Florina, as well as to others where two-thirds of the Orthodox inhabitants acknowledged its jurisdiction. This right was from the first strenuously contested by the Patriarchate, and the conflict which ensued soon developed into one of races and politics rather than of churches and religion. The Exarchate, supported by Stambuloff, had aimed at establishing the preponderance of the Bulgarian element by means of bishops, priests and schoolmasters; but in 1893 a group of young Macedonians, finding the methods of the schoolmaster too slow, founded the "Internal Organization." While in Macedonia itself it could only exist as a secret committee, it established a regular political

organization among the Macedonians in Bulgaria. So long as Stambuloff was in power the action of the latter was kept well in hand, but shortly after his fall its activities became more pronounced, and in 1895 the Macedonian Central Committee was founded at Sofia. Its methods were openly revolutionary: it collected money, enrolled bands and preached insurrection, while the Government remained a passive spectator, doing nothing to arrest the movement till compelled to do so in consequence of the serious representations of the Powers.

Meanwhile the feeling in favour of a reconciliation with Russia was gaining ground, and the question of the religion of the heir apparent was being openly discussed. In thus allowing Prince Boris's conversion to become an article of a political programme, Prince Ferdinand had neither gauged the strength of the religious objections of his wife's family nor foreseen the political pressure which eventually induced him to give effect to it. As a result of his having taken the reins of Government into his own hands, the attacks of the opposition were now directed against his person, and he had come to be regarded as an obstacle to the realization of the national wish. Plots for his assassination were discovered, and extraordinary precautions had to be taken for his safety. A ministerial crisis was threatened, and the Sobranje voiced the desire of the nation that Prince Boris should pass into the Orthodox Church. Before taking a final decision, Prince Ferdinand went on a pilgrimage to Rome in the hope of persuading the Pope to release him from the engagement which he had contracted on his marriage. His Holiness, however, was inexorable, and on his return

to Sofia Prince Ferdinand, after first feigning to contemplate abdication, signed a proclamation providing for Prince Boris's confirmation according to Orthodox rites. The Emperor Nicholas accepted the office of godfather, while M. Tcharikoff was accredited as Russian diplomatic agent at Sofia. The Sultan at the same time recognized His Royal Highness as Prince of Bulgaria and as Governor-General of Eastern Roumelia; the other Powers gave their assent, and Prince Ferdinand's position was formally regularized. The recognition of the Powers had, however, been purchased by a moral sacrifice which, though imposed on him in great measure by reasons of high policy, was none the less prompted by motives of personal ambition. In breaking the solemn engagement which had alone rendered his marriage possible, or, as he preferred to put it, in sacrificing his child for the welfare of Bulgaria, he had loosened the ties which bound him to his own family and to the Western Powers. "The West," Prince Ferdinand told the Sobranje, "has pronounced its anathema on me; the day dawn of the East spreads its rays around my dynasty and illuminates our future."

But to return to Macedonia, where the Internal Organization had not been idle. The period of secret preparation, at which they had been working for five years, was in 1897 brought to a close. A period of action was inaugurated, while the committee was transformed into a terroristic organization whose decisions were executed by the bands. Every year that passed witnessed fresh excesses on the part of the Turks and fresh reprisals on the part of the committees. The attitude of successive Bulgarian Governments towards

the insurrectionary movement differed only in degree, and, while condemning its criminal practices, they one and all sympathized with its aims. Whenever a crisis seemed imminent representations were made by the Powers at Sofia. Austria and Russia, however, did not always act cordially together, and the attitude of M. Bakhméteeff, the Russian diplomatic agent, and of the Panslavist agents in the Balkans did not tally with the assurances of the official Russia at St. Petersburg. The presence of a Russian Grand Duke and of General Ignatieff at the fêtes held in the autumn of 1902 to commemorate the taking of the Shipka Pass was not, moreover, calculated to damp the ardour of the Macedonian committees, and the language held by General Ignatieff was a direct incentive to action.

In December Count Lamsdorff himself paid a short visit to Sofia, during which he made it clear that Russia had no intention of allowing the committees to drag her into an armed intervention in the Balkans. On his journey home via Vienna he elaborated with Count Goluchowski a scheme of reforms, of which the principal feature was the appointment of Hilmi Pasha as inspector-general of the three Macedonian vilayets. This scheme, which came into force in February, 1903, was not far-reaching enough to satisfy public opinion in Bulgaria, and the Stambulovist Government—which came into power shortly afterwards—determined to resume its party's traditional policy of cultivating good relations with Turkey, while endeavouring to extract concessions by working on her fears of foreign intervention. The Russian Government, however, were opposed to a direct understanding between vassal and suzerain, and the Bulgarian mission that had been des-

patched to Constantinople for the purpose of effecting such an understanding returned empty-handed. Meanwhile in Macedonia preparations for a general rising were being hurriedly pushed forward, and in August the signal was given.

The Bulgarian Government were not prepared for war, and, despite the intense resentment aroused by the methods of repression to which Turkey had recourse, they so mistrusted the drift of Russia's policy that they were anxious to avoid an open rupture with Turkey. Russia, they believed, was playing a double game. While the Russian Ambassador at Constantinople was advocating a stern repression of the insurrection, the Russian agent at Sofia was supporting the cause of the insurgents—and both seemed bent on causing a breach between Bulgaria and Turkey that would furnish Russia with a pretext for intervention. The only result attained by the insurrection was to bring home to Europe the gravity of the situation as well as the necessity of adopting measures of a more thoroughgoing and practical kind. Thanks in great measure to Lord Lansdowne's initiative, an extensive reform scheme was concerted by Count Lamsdorff and Count Goluchowski at Mürzteg in October. The principal points in this scheme were the appointment of an Austrian and Russian civil agent as assessors to Hilmi Pasha, the reorganization of the gendarmerie by a staff of foreign officers, the reform of the judicial administration, financial provision for the return of the refugees and so on.

Though some of its provisions were received with satisfaction by the Bulgarian Government, the scheme as a whole was vitiated in their eyes by the fact that

the control of its application was vested in Austria and Russia, the two most reactionary and self-interested members of the European Concert. Such was the position of affairs when the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War caused the Bulgarian Government to reconsider their attitude. Despite their apprehension of Russia's designs, they had always cherished the comforting conviction that, should they meet with a crushing disaster in a war with Turkey, Russia would come to their assistance; while, apart from the fear of finding themselves isolated in the hour of defeat, they were preoccupied by the idea that Austria might take advantage of Russia's embarrassments to occupy the northern districts of Macedonia. Negotiations for a direct understanding with Turkey were therefore resumed, and in April, 1904, an agreement was signed that served to place the relations between vassal and suzerain on a more friendly footing, though, owing to Russian opposition, it failed to secure the extension, so much desired by Bulgaria, of the Mürzteg reform scheme to the Adrianople vilayet.

It was while these negotiations were still in progress that I arrived in Sofia, shortly after the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War.

CHAPTER VI

1904–1908

SO far as my personal relations with the Prince were concerned, I began my mission under favourable auspices, for, in signifying his agreement to my appointment as His Majesty's agent and consul-general, Prince Ferdinand had, in one of those well-turned phrases of which he was a past master, written: "*Enchanté de recevoir le fils de son père, qui était l'ami du mien.*" On the other hand, the official relations between the two Governments had for some time past been marked by a certain coolness owing to the extreme Russophil policy initiated by His Royal Highness. Nor had these relations been improved by an incident, which had led to a personal estrangement between the two Courts. On receiving the news of Queen Victoria's death Prince Ferdinand had called at the Legation and, in announcing his intention of attending the funeral, had stipulated that he should be given the precedence due to him as Ruler of Bulgaria instead of being treated, as he had been at the time of the Diamond Jubilee, as a cadet of the House of Coburg. The Prince had been informed in reply that this was not a fitting occasion to raise such a question, and that no change could be made in the procedure already sanctioned. His Royal Highness thereupon countermanded the arrangements made for his journey. He sent a deputation to represent him,

but he himself spent the day of the funeral at Philippopolis, where he celebrated Prince Boris's birthday with a review and a gala luncheon to which the Russian representative at Sofia was specially invited. This "painful episode," as Prince Ferdinand termed what he regarded as a personal slight, had naturally seriously indisposed King Edward against him.

I had always looked on Bulgaria as the most important factor in the Balkans and, in view of the new situation created by the Russo-Japanese War, I was more than ever anxious to wean her if possible from too great dependence on Russia. I had, therefore, when presenting my letters of credence, laid stress, with Lord Lansdowne's sanction, on the sympathetic interest with which His Majesty's Government had followed her moral and material progress under Prince Ferdinand's rule, and had emphasized their feelings of friendship for her people. With a Prince, however, who was careful to keep the direction of foreign affairs in his own hands and who was, moreover, naturally drawn towards any Power that understood how to flatter his vanity, a better understanding between the two Governments could only be arrived at by placing his personal relations with the Court of St. James's on a more intimate footing.

Before leaving England I had had the honour of being invited to Windsor for a couple of nights, and I had then endeavoured to induce King Edward to charge me with a friendly message to Prince Ferdinand that would tend to promote the success of my mission. The King, however, was not to be moved. "You may tell the Prince," he said, "that I have not forgotten the fact that he is my cousin, but that, so long as he pursues

his present double-faced policy he cannot count on my support." Such a caustic message was not encouraging, and I was rather at a loss what to say when, at a dinner given me at the palace shortly after my arrival at Sofia, I had to reply to the King's health which the Prince had proposed in very friendly terms. I did not dare disturb the harmony of the evening by giving His Majesty's message in its entirety, as that would have had the effect of a bombshell. I therefore took for my text His Majesty's reference to the *liens de parenté* existing between him and the Prince, and after embroidering this theme, concluded by saying a few nice things about the Prince and Bulgaria without making it clear whether I was expressing the King's feelings or my own personal views.

On my sitting down Prince Ferdinand shook me warmly by the hand and remarked: "Things are then not as bad as I thought." After a moment's pause he looked at me and said: "*Feu Lord Salisbury m'a toujours traité en assassin de Stambuloff!*" I began to protest feebly, when it fortunately occurred to me to repeat to the Prince, in an amended and more palatable form, a story which Lord Sanderson had once told me about His Royal Highness's visit to London in the Diamond Jubilee year. Lord Salisbury, I said, had rather a poor opinion of his fellow men and was not given to wasting his time on what he considered as unprofitable conversations. On its being suggested that he ought to call on His Royal Highness he had raised every sort of objection, and it was only after considerable pressure had been brought to bear on him that he had eventually consented to do so. He had returned, however, in quite

another frame of mind, and in conversation with Lord Sanderson had, like Napoleon after his interview with Goethe, said of His Royal Highness: "*Voilà un homme.*" The Prince was delighted and made no further reference to his supposed complicity in Stambuloff's assassination. But he would not have been so pleased had I told him that, though Lord Salisbury did really say: "There's a man," his lordship had added: "but I would not like to be his Prime Minister."

Though the signature of the Turco-Bulgarian agreement had helped to relax the prevailing tension, the atmosphere at Sofia was constantly charged with electricity, and never did a winter pass without the oft-repeated warning that, when the snows melted in the Balkans we should witness the outbreak of the long-talked-of war. For the moment, however, the Bulgarian Government were anxious to give the promised reforms a chance, and were, for other reasons, disposed to exercise a restraining influence on the insurgent leaders. The state of exhaustion, to which the Bulgarian element in Macedonia had been reduced by the disorganization reigning in the ranks of the committees, had encouraged the Greeks to recruit bands in Crete and Greece which, thanks to the connivance of the local Turkish authorities, were able to strike crushing blows at their Bulgarian rivals. Their crowning exploit—the destruction of the village of Zagorichani in the spring of 1904 and the massacre of the majority of its inhabitants—provoked a serious anti-Greek movement in Bulgaria that resulted in the seizure of many of the Greek Patriarchate churches.

On the other hand, Bulgaria's relations with Rou-

mania showed signs of improvement. Though both were exposed to the common danger of Russian aggression, the good understanding, which had been established while Prince Alexander was on the throne, had not been maintained during the reign of his successor. It would indeed have been strange had men of such entirely different characters as King Charles and Prince Ferdinand remained friends; as it was, each of the two Sovereigns disliked each other personally, and each distrusted the other's policy. The fall of Stambuloff had completed the breach. Roumania was credited by the one with a wish to extend her frontier to a better strategical line at the expense of the principality, and Bulgaria was believed by the other to have designs on the Dobrudja and to resent the attempt being made there to Roumanize the Bulgarian population. King Charles blamed Prince Ferdinand for allowing himself to be entangled in the meshes of his old enemy Russia and for deserting his former friends Austria and Roumania; while Prince Ferdinand, who regarded with suspicion Roumania's military convention with Austria, spoke of King Charles as a puppet in the hands of the Austrian and German Emperors and as their watchman on the Danube. The King, moreover, was strongly opposed to the idea of any territorial aggrandisement which would disturb the balance of power in the Balkans, and had even on one occasion told the Prince that if the Bulgarian army crossed the Rhodope the Roumanian army would occupy Silistria. Since 1902, however, when King Charles had paid his long-deferred return visit to Sofia, the personal relations between the two Sovereigns, as well as the official relations between the two Governments, had improved, and recent events

in Macedonia—where both Koutzo-Vlachs and Bulgarians were exposed to the attacks of Greek bands—had helped to bring the two countries nearer together.

Though an understanding with Serbia was beset with still greater difficulties, an interview which Prince Ferdinand had with King Peter at Nisch in the summer of 1904, and an official visit paid by the latter to Sofia later in that year, paved the way for somewhat better relations. During this visit I unwittingly incurred the Prince's serious displeasure, and it manifested itself in a very characteristic fashion. His Majesty's Government had not yet recognized King Peter, so that I was debarred from attending the State banquet given in his honour; but on the day of His Majesty's arrival curiosity prompted me to watch the royal procession from the balcony of a friend's house. As he drove past on his way to the station Prince Ferdinand waved his hand in friendly greeting. On returning to the palace with the King he again looked up at the balcony, and failing to make me out, as I had kept well in the background till the procession had passed the house, he turned round in his carriage and, catching my eye, smiled and winked. I was so taken aback that my face probably expressed my blank astonishment, but I thought no more of the incident.

On the following day the Bulgarian agent in London happened to be dining with me. As I had heard that at the dinner at the palace on the preceding evening the Russian representative had been treated as if he were on quite a different plane from the representatives of the other Powers, I took the opportunity of protesting against such a differential treatment, and remarked that if Prince Ferdinand

accorded M. Bakhméteeff the position of a Russian viceroy, he need not look to His Majesty's Government for sympathy and support. Two days later M. Tsokoff, who had, as I learnt later, repeated these remarks to the Prince, was sent to tell me that His Royal Highness regarded the look which I had given him on the day of King Peter's arrival as a personal insult. Such was Prince Ferdinand's way of marking his displeasure with my outspoken language to M. Tsokoff. I had, however, to take his message seriously, so I wrote him a private letter expressing my painful surprise at this unfounded charge and saying that I could only ask pardon for an offence which I had not committed. The situation was rendered all the more piquant by the fact that I had, a few days previously, invited the Prince to dine on the King's birthday, while he was, apparently, contemplating asking for my recall. In the end he accepted my invitation, and nothing was said at the dinner about our little misunderstanding. On the contrary, we paid each other compliments and exchanged pretty speeches, for with a character such as his one could, as Lord Beaconsfield put it, lay flattery on with a trowel.

It was not long, however, before I was once more in his black books. Prince Ferdinand had, in the summer of 1904, met King Edward at Marienbad, and in an audience which I had on going to London in the following February I had suggested that His Majesty should put the seal on this reconciliation by inviting His Royal Highness to pay him a short visit at Buckingham Palace. The King agreed, and in authorizing me to convey an invitation to the Prince added: "Tell him only to bring a small suite, as the

smaller the Prince the larger the suite." Knowing how touchy Prince Ferdinand was on all matters of etiquette, I, with much difficulty, obtained the King's permission to go to meet him on his arrival at Dover, and to make other arrangements for his reception. At the dinner given in his honour at Buckingham Palace the Prince told my wife that this was the first time that he had been received with the honours due to his rank, and that he would never forget all that I had done for him. The next day there was the usual exchange of decorations, and His Royal Highness showed his gratitude by sending me a Bulgarian order of the second class, being piqued at the fact that the King had, after consulting me, only given the Bulgarian agent the K.C.V.O. On my representing to the King that, as most of my colleagues at Sofia had Bulgarian orders of the first class, I would prefer not to accept this decoration, His Majesty caused a communication to be made to the Prince that resulted in my receiving the Grand Cross in time for me to wear it at the dinner given by the Prince of Wales at Marlborough House. On leaving the dining-room after dinner the King said to me in passing, "I am so glad that it's all right"; but Prince Ferdinand, who had overheard this remark, was not so pleased, and, putting his eyeglass in his eye and looking up at the ceiling, cut me dead. Though he had to put up with my company on his journey to Dover, he did not speak to me for six months after my return to Sofia. The visit, nevertheless, served a useful purpose in spite of his not being altogether satisfied with his conversations with Lord Lansdowne, who, he complained, was too "*boutonné.*"

Meanwhile Prince Ferdinand had succeeded in establishing better relations with both Austria and Germany. Austria's one desire was to dissociate Bulgaria from Serbia and to induce her, by motives of self-interest, to renounce all idea of a political or economic alliance with that kingdom. It was in consequence of the pressure which she had brought to bear at Belgrade that the so-called Serbo-Bulgarian Customs Union Treaty, negotiated in 1905, was never ratified by the Skuptschina, although it had been voted, by acclamation, by the Sobranje and although Prince Ferdinand had even undertaken to make common cause with Serbia should the latter be drawn into a tariff war with the Dual Monarchy. The result was that Bulgaria, who had been on the verge of a rupture of commercial relations with Austria, arranged a *modus vivendi* with that Empire on the basis of the most favoured nation treatment; while Austria abandoned her attitude of cold reserve and adopted one of friendly interest in the principality. Germany had also become alive to the fact that Bulgaria, as the most promising of the Balkan States, was worthy of her serious attention. The German Emperor went out of his way to be civil to the Prince, and the German Government posed as her disinterested friend. A German bank was established at Sofia, mountain guns and artillery ammunition were supplied to the army, and German capital was encouraged to assist in the economic exploitation of the country. Prince Ferdinand, on the other hand, hoped to enlist the services of German diplomacy on his side and to use the influence of the Sultan's friend in support of Bulgaria's claims in Macedonia. His leanings towards Berlin

were, moreover, prompted by the belief that Russia was, for the moment, powerless to help him. It had been fear rather than love of Russia that had, ever since Stambuloff's fall, been the keynote of his policy, as he had always been haunted by the dread of sharing the fate of his predecessor or of falling a victim to some plot for his assassination. The enfeeblement of that Empire, owing to the turn which events had taken in the Far East, had therefore afforded him a welcome relief. Russian influence, indeed, had been on the wane ever since the fall of the Russophil Daneff Government in 1903; and the following incident, which, though trivial in itself, gradually assumed an international character, shows how low the prestige of the Russian agency had fallen in 1905.

I happened to be president that year of the Union Club, and M. Bakhméteeff—who had more than once tried to make things unpleasant for me—wrote to me one day saying that he had torn up that week's copy of *Simplicissimus* on account of a caricature which it had published of the Emperor Nicholas. He concluded by requesting me, as president, to stop its being any longer taken in by the club. I replied that other Sovereigns had been frequently caricatured in *Simplicissimus*, and that if, in an international club like the Union, members were at liberty to tear up any paper that displeased them, there would not be many left intact in the reading room. Had he, I added, sent me the caricature in question and requested me to have the *Simplicissimus* suppressed, I would have submitted the question to the committee, and I was even now prepared to do so if he would admit that he had acted incorrectly. He declined, however, to do this, and

rejected other overtures which I made him with the object of providing a golden bridge over which he might beat a graceful retreat. He even told me that he had but to hold up his little finger and all the Bulgarian members of the club would support him. Finally, after the incident had lasted some ten days, he wrote requesting me to strike his name and the names of all his staff from the list of the members of the club over which I presided. As I had no wish to expose myself to the charge of having purposely forced the staff of the Russian agency to leave the club, I at once sent in my resignation as president—an example that was followed by all the members of the committee. A general meeting had consequently to be held to elect a new president and a new committee, and after I had briefly stated the facts of the case we were all re-elected, with but one dissentient voice—that of a secretary of the Greek Legation. M. Bakhméteeff was naturally furious and cut me ever afterwards. He was, fortunately, transferred to Tokio in the following year, and after the appointment of M. Sementowski as Russian diplomatic agent in 1907 my relations with the Russian agency, more especially after the Reval meeting, were of a most cordial character.

It is by no means an easy matter to follow the course of Prince Ferdinand's foreign policy, for he always made it a rule not to commit himself to any definite line of action. An opportunist, inspired solely by regard for his own personal interests, he preferred to pursue a *politique de bascule* and to coquette first with one and then with another of the Powers as he deemed best for the advancement of those interests.

When in 1907 Serbia's persistent efforts to divide up Macedonia into spheres of influence had brought the two countries to the verge of war, it was to Austria that he turned, as he had no wish to see the eventual march of the Bulgarian army on Belgrade arrested, as it had been in 1885, by the intervention of a second Count Khevenhüller. His advances were met in a benevolent spirit; but as the war scare passed away his thoughts were diverted into another channel.

Prince Ferdinand had long cherished the ambition of converting the principality into an independent kingdom, and the twentieth anniversary of his accession to the throne, which was to be celebrated at Tirnovo by the convocation of a grand national assembly composed of all deputies who had ever sat in the Sobranje, seemed to furnish a grateful nation with a fitting occasion for offering their Prince a royal crown. His Royal Highness, as was his wont on occasions of this sort, kept carefully in the background and allowed others to do the necessary spade-work. The foreign representatives were sounded and feelers were put out with a view to preparing the public for what was coming. Though the idea of thus gratifying the Prince's vanity appealed but to a few interested generals and politicians, it was nevertheless generally expected that he would be acclaimed King at one of the many banquets by which the anniversary would be celebrated, and that he would yield to this *douce violence*. Austria, however, whose plans for the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina had not yet matured, considered that the pyschological moment had not yet come for such an open violation of the Treaty of Berlin. She therefore demanded a categorical answer to the question whether or not

independence was about to be proclaimed, and warned the Prince that the Emperor would not recognize such a change in the status of the principality. His Royal Highness, who happened to be abroad, at once published a manifesto, assuring his subjects that their Prince "*s'est imposé d'autres devoirs envers la nation et ne saurait s'occuper de vaines questions de formalités, de titres et de satisfaction personelle.*" He subsequently repeated these assurances both to the Emperor at Ischl and to Baron Aehrenthal at Vienna, while the Tirnovo fêtes were countermanded and his Jubilee celebrated on a modest scale at Sofia. In vetoing the proclamation of Bulgarian independence the Emperor of Austria had been careful to gild the pill by conferring on the Prince the colonelcy of an Austrian regiment; but this compliment did not soothe his wounded feelings. He had, he confided to a friend, been treated "*d'une manière indigne*," and he would take care, when he found a favourable opportunity for declaring Bulgaria's independence, that nobody should have an inkling of his intentions an hour beforehand.

While Prince Ferdinand had been thus coquetting with Austria, he had not neglected Russia. The Emperor had, at the orthodox New Year, appealed to the weak side of the Prince's character by conferring on him the brilliants of the Order of St. André, and in the following September His Majesty deputed the Grand Duke Vladimir to inaugurate the statue erected by the Bulgarian nation at Sofia to the memory of the Tsar Liberator. The political importance of this visit lay chiefly in the fact that it was the first sign which Russia had given since her war with Japan of the revival of her active interest in the affairs of the Near

East and of her desire to reassert her influence in Bulgaria. The welcome given the Russian visitors by all classes of the population was also symptomatic. For it showed that, in spite of the intrigues by which Russia had in the past endeavoured to undermine the independence of the principality, the salient fact alone remained that, as it was to Russia that Bulgaria had owed her emancipation, so it was to Russia that she must look for the realization of her dreams of the Greater Bulgaria projected in the Treaty of San Stefano. On the other hand, the astonishing progress accomplished by the principality and the efficiency of her army were a revelation to the Grand Duke and his staff, who realized for the first time that Bulgaria, though founding her hopes for the future on Russia, was now a factor with whom Russia would have to count and was no longer necessarily dependent on her. The astute mind of the Prince had, moreover, not been slow to grasp the fact that both Russia and Austria had need of his co-operation, and that it was to his interest to keep them apart so as to be free to side with whichever of them was prepared to pay the highest price for that co-operation.

Early in the following year Prince Ferdinand decided to part with his Stambulovist advisers, who during their five years' tenure of office had amassed small fortunes, and to allow one of the other parties to have, as he put it, a bite at the bone. He chose the democrats, under Malinoff, as their successors; but insisted, as was his wont, on the appointment of two outsiders to the Ministries of War and of Foreign Affairs, in order to keep the control of those two

ministries in his own hands. The result of the elections, which followed the dissolution of the Sobranje, was a complete victory for the new ministry; but the methods of constitutional government as practised in Bulgaria may be gauged by the fact that the Stambulovists, who had been in a majority of two to one in the late chamber, were unrepresented in the new one, while the Democrats, who had previously but two parliamentary representatives, won 173 out of a total of 203 seats.

CHAPTER VII

1908–1910

IN the spring of 1908 His Majesty's Government had put forward a far-reaching scheme of reforms for Macedonia that had caused intense satisfaction in Bulgaria; and the somewhat negative attitude which Russia adopted towards it did but make her turn more than ever towards Great Britain. A new factor, however, had suddenly appeared on the scene in the shape of the constitutional movement in Turkey which took Europe by surprise at the end of July. The first impression produced at Sofia was one of scepticism, and the revival of the Constitution of 1876 by Imperial Decree was regarded in the light of a ruse to gain time for the purpose of nullifying the new reform scheme. It was for this reason that the overtures, made at the outset by the Young Turks to the Macedonian committees, were rejected; but as the constitutional movement gathered force the question as to how Bulgarian interests would be affected by the new order of things had to be seriously considered. On the one hand, it was felt that a constitutional régime, if honestly applied, would enable the Bulgarian element in Macedonia to develop both politically and materially; on the other, it was feared that it might seriously compromise the realization of Bulgaria's national aspirations in Macedonia. The Government, at a loss whether to support

or to oppose it, adopted an attitude of reserve; but, while it was thus searching for a policy, an event occurred at Constantinople that determined its choice. The Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs had omitted to invite the Bulgarian agent to a banquet, given the heads of missions in honour of the Sultan's birthday, on the ground that the dinner in question was confined to representatives of Foreign Powers, and that, if in the past M. Gueshoff had ever been treated as a member of the diplomatic body, it had been owing to an oversight on the part of a Court official. M. Gueshoff was, in consequence, at once ordered to return to Sofia. This incident, though trifling in itself, raised the whole question of Bulgaria's international status; and the Government felt that, if they now yielded on a point of etiquette, they might later on have to surrender other rights and privileges, acquired by a series of precedents, despite the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin. The nominal rights of suzerainty vested in Turkey had, they held, but proved a constant source of friction in the past, and they, therefore, decided to sever the connecting link. The moment was well chosen for such a step. Austria-Hungary, they were aware, was also contemplating the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and, as Prince Ferdinand was about to visit the Emperor of Austria at Buda-Pesth, it would not be difficult to arrange that the two acts should proceed on parallel lines. An opportune strike on the Oriental railway, and the consequent stoppage of all traffic in South Bulgaria, provided them further with a plea that appealed much more to the national sentiment than had the Gueshoff incident; and they at once proceeded to occupy the Bulgarian section of the

line. The retention of the railway was so essential to the success of the campaign in favour of independence that, though the strike had terminated, the Government, in spite of the representations of the Powers, decided on September 28 not to restore it to the company. Events were now moving fast, and on October 4 a Cabinet Council, held under the presidency of the Prince, who had just returned from Hungary, finally decided in favour of independence. On the following day His Royal Highness was solemnly proclaimed Tsar of the Bulgarians at Tirnovo, their ancient capital.

I had, at the end of August, been offered the post of Minister at The Hague, but had subsequently, in view of the growing gravity of the situation, been asked to stay on at Sofia and to see the crisis through, a request which I complied with all the more readily as it was accompanied by the assurance that I should not be a financial loser by this arrangement. I had not unnaturally interpreted this assurance to mean that I should receive my Hague salary, which was some £2,000 more than that of Sofia; but, when after eight strenuous months of incessant work, with a chancery composed of a single vice-consul, reinforced by the voluntary services of my wife and daughter, I claimed the fulfilment of this promise, I was met with a polite *non possumus*.

The negotiations that ensued after the Declaration of Independence centred round the two questions of the Oriental railway and the East Roumelia tribute; and it was only thanks to the energetic intervention of Great Britain, France and Russia—for the Powers of the Triple Alliance did but little to prevent a rupture

—that peace was preserved. The majority of Bulgarians were strongly opposed to the idea of paying for independence in hard cash, and, though Prince Ferdinand had, in October, in a telegram to the President of the French Republic, acknowledged Turkey's claim to compensation, his Ministers had contested his right as a constitutional Sovereign to make such a declaration without consulting them. Both Great Britain and Russia had strongly disapproved of the Declaration of Independence, made, as it was, in collusion with Austria; and Russia more especially resented what she regarded as an act of treason on Prince Ferdinand's part in allowing Austria to preside over what ought to have been a *fête de famille Slave*. British public opinion, on the other hand, was warmly on the side of the Young Turks, and the British Press not only manifested its sympathy with the aggrieved parties, but was loud in its denunciation of Bulgaria. I, personally, nevertheless, espoused the cause of the latter and acted throughout the whole crisis as their advocate with His Majesty's Government, for the Young Turks, with whose delegates I had become acquainted at Sofia, inspired me with neither sympathy nor confidence. My Russian colleague, M. Sementowski, took the same line; and Russia, through fear of being completely supplanted by Austria, eventually adopted a strong pro-Bulgarian attitude which was not quite compatible with the view taken by His Majesty's Government of the inviolability of treaties.

From the very outset Bulgaria had declared that she would not expend more than 82,000,000 francs on account of the railway, and that she would pay no tribute for East Roumelia for the period sub-

sequent to the Declaration of Independence. She knew what she wanted, and was determined to get it, and, as I told the Foreign Office, she had got her back to the wall and would not sign a blank cheque for the Powers to fill in. On two occasions—in January and in April, 1909—she risked a war with Turkey because the negotiations were proceeding too slowly for her, and in the end she got what she wanted. It was, however, in great measure due to the pressure brought to bear on the Porte by His Majesty's Government, that the Turco-Bulgarian protocol recognizing independence was signed on April 19, 1909. Russia, as was but natural, wished to be the first Power to recognize the new order of things, and on April 21 the Emperor Nicholas addressed a telegram to King Ferdinand, congratulating him on the independence of his country. Two days later the French agent and I conveyed to the Bulgarian Government the official recognition of our respective Governments, and on the 27th the Austrian, German and Italian agents followed our example.

During all these months of crisis I had had to refrain from any official intercourse with Prince Ferdinand, and such unofficial communications as passed between us had to be made through his Chef de Cabinet. As an unrecognized King he was more than ever sensitive to anything in the nature of a personal slight, and, though he had never reason to complain of any want of respect on my part, he on one occasion sent his Chef de Cabinet to draw my attention to some facetious comments which an English illustrated paper had appended to a picture of his triumphal entry into Sofia after the Proclamation of Independence. The

Prince, who was never quite happy on horseback, had failed to arrive at the time fixed for his entry, and, as nearly an hour passed without his putting in an appearance, some wag remarked: "Perhaps His Majesty has been pleased to part company with his horse." For some reason best known to himself, Prince Ferdinand suspected my daughter of having written the peccant paragraph, and, in spite of my indignant denial, he only withdrew the charge on discovering shortly afterwards that the real culprit was a well-known journalist. After his recognition as King by His Majesty's Government our relations were of a most cordial character, and at a dinner which he gave us on the eve of our departure for The Hague, he bade us farewell in almost affectionate terms.

I have already called attention to certain sides of Prince Ferdinand's character and to his very questionable conduct at various stages of his career; but, before leaving the subject, I must sum up my general impressions of him.

His parting with Stambuloff and his subsequent treatment of his fallen Minister; his breach of faith with his wife's family on the question of the religion of the heir to the throne; and his attitude of almost abject prostration before Russia after Prince Boris's conversion, all reveal to us a man dominated by strong personal ambitions and not much troubled with scruples as to the mode of their attainment. But an impartial critic, reviewing the first twenty-two years of his reign —for with the period subsequent to my departure from Sofia I am not at present concerned—would have to make allowances for the exceptional difficulties with

which he had been confronted and to place certain things to his credit. When, as a young lieutenant in the Austrian army, he elected to face the risks attendant on his acceptance of the Bulgarian crown, he was generally regarded as an adventurer embarking on a forlorn hope that could only end in failure. But Prince Bismarck was right when he said : "*Der Coburger wird sich doch durchfressen*" ("The Coburger will worry through"). Unrecognized by the Powers for the first eight years of his reign, he was, as he said of himself, "the pariah of Europe," and it required no small moral courage on his part to brave not only the open hostility of Russia, but her still more dangerous secret machinations, as well as frequent plots for his assassination. During those trying years he developed talents and capacities with which no one had credited him, and proved himself beyond all expectation a successful ruler of a somewhat turbulent Balkan State. It was thanks to his restraining influence that the principality had not yet embarked on war with Turkey, and it was largely due to his initiative and foresight that it had advanced so rapidly on the path of progress. "*Je remplis ma mission philanthropique*," Prince Ferdinand once said to me, and if for "philanthropic" he had substituted "civilizing" he would not have been far from the truth.

In spite, however, of the services which he had rendered his adopted country, the Prince never won the affections of his subjects, for he was not endowed with those special qualities that arouse popular enthusiasm, while the pomp and paraphernalia of royalty, with which he loved to surround himself, did not appeal to a simple-minded and democratic people

like the Bulgarians. He had, none the less, succeeded in inspiring a certain respect for his person that bordered on fear in the case of those whose official positions brought them into immediate contact with him, and stories are told of members of his household, who had incurred his displeasure, hiding in the palace garden in the hope of escaping from the wrath to come. His intellectual gifts were many and varied. He was master of some seven or eight languages, was well read, was a distinguished botanist and ornithologist, and, when he pleased, the most charming of *causeurs*. He was very *journalier*, but if he was in a good humour he would keep me at an audience for an hour or two talking on every possible subject in the most perfect French, or lapsing occasionally into English or German if he could not find in French an appropriate phrase to give expression to his thoughts. Vanity and love of theatrical effect were the weak points of his character; but I should be lacking in gratitude were I to be oblivious of the sympathy and kindness which he showed me on more than one occasion. His talents as a diplomatist were of no mean order; but his conduct of foreign affairs suffered from his love of intrigue and from over-confidence in his ability to outwit others. Prince Ferdinand was, in a word, an interesting and complex personality who, as he himself told me, had been happily described by King Edward, when presenting Lord Haldane to him at Marienbad, as "*l'homme le plus fin en Europe.*"

Early in 1908 Prince Ferdinand had married, *en secondes noces*, Princess Eleonora of Reuss-Köstritz, a lady who, unlike her husband, had succeeded in winning the affections of the Bulgarians by the kindly

interest which she showed in everything that concerned their welfare, and more especially in the working of the hospitals, which were in a very backward state. The Princess had served with the Russian Red Cross in the Japanese War and had gained much experience as a nurse, an experience by which I benefited when, as the result of a riding accident, I was laid up for weeks and weeks with a broken leg and ankle. Not only did she make all the necessary arrangements for my being carried on a stretcher to one of the hospitals, where the fractures were photographed with Röntgen rays, but she discussed with the doctors the best means of relieving the pain which was causing me sleepless nights, and she often came and sat with me, bringing me flowers and showing me a kindness which I can never forget. Her life with the Prince was far from a happy one, but she was a real mother to his children, who were all devoted to her. Prince Boris—the present King—was then a very attractive but a rather shy boy who stood in perpetual fear of his father, as the latter's natural affection for his son was tempered by the unpleasant misgiving which he did not always conceal, that his heir might one day supplant him. He even told me on one occasion that, if the Bulgarians imagined that, were they to force him to abdicate, they could keep Prince Boris as his successor, they were much mistaken, as, in the event of his having to leave the principality, he would take good care that his son accompanied him into exile.

Prince Ferdinand's personality so overshadowed that of others that I have not thought it necessary to speak of his Ministers, with whom I had to transact business, as they were for the most part but puppets whose movements were governed by the strings which

he held in his hand. There were, however, a few exceptions to this rule, and among them I would cite M. Petkoff and M. Stancioff—for both of whom I had a sincere personal regard. The former was a striking figure. The son of a peasant, he had in early life been a revolutionary and an intimate friend of Stambuloff. During the Russophil reaction that followed the latter's assassination, he conducted a violent Press campaign against the Prince, with whom, however, he became reconciled in 1899. He eventually became Prime Minister and was the most trustworthy and patriotic of Bulgarian statesmen, being one of the few who ventured to express his views openly to his Sovereign. He was, unfortunately for his country, assassinated in 1907. M. Stancioff, on the other hand, was a highly cultured man who had served successively as diplomatic agent at Bucharest, Vienna and St. Petersburg, and who took a far broader and more cosmopolitan view of things than the majority of his compatriots. My relations with him, when he was Minister for Foreign Affairs, were always of a most cordial kind, and it was in great measure due to his conciliatory attitude that the negotiations which I had to conduct for the conclusion of a treaty of commerce ended satisfactorily. Later on he was Bulgarian Minister in Paris and, after the outbreak of the Great War, had the courage to warn King Ferdinand, with whom he had always been a favourite, against the fatal step which he was about to take, in language which lost him his Sovereign's favour and led to his complete disgrace. His appointment as Bulgarian Minister in London has given me a welcome opportunity of renewing our old friendship.

When I left Sofia at the end of May, 1909, I received from public men of nearly all parties so many marks of the sympathy entertained for my country and of the gratitude which they felt for the services rendered Bulgaria by His Majesty's Government during the recent crisis, that, had I then been told that, in less than a decade, Bulgaria would be at war with Great Britain, I should not have believed it possible. Entente diplomacy during the intervening years cannot, however, as I shall endeavour to show later, be held entirely blameless in this matter.

On my arrival in London I was received in audience by King Edward, to kiss hands on my appointment to The Hague, when His Majesty, after referring in very flattering terms to my work at Sofia, handed me the insignia of the G.C.V.O. I was further given the K.C.M.G. as a mark of the approval of His Majesty's Government, while Sir E. Grey expressed his appreciation of my services in the following official dispatch :

> I desire to take this opportunity to convey to you the high appreciation entertained by His Majesty's Government of the manner in which you have filled the post of British representative at Sofia since the date of your appointment in November, 1903, and their entire approval of your action during the recent crisis.
>
> Your interesting and able reports on the situation proved invaluable to His Majesty's Government in their efforts for the maintenance of peace, and the moderating influence which you successfully exerted on several occasions largely contributed to the attainment of their object.

After such a storm centre as Sofia, The Hague was a very haven of rest—whose calm waters were unruffled by any political convulsion that might be taking

place in the distant Balkans. With the exception of an occasional conference on such a stirring topic as bills of exchange, or the meeting of an arbitral tribunal, there was but little work to do. I had, however, while in Bulgaria had such a surfeit of constantly recurring crises, with their attendant war scares, that I was glad to have leisure to devote to the study of a country so interesting as Holland; to visit its picturesque old towns, its art treasures, its storied monuments; and to revel in that sea of ever-changing glorious colours into which its fields are transformed when the tulips are in bloom. For myself, too, The Hague, and especially the Legation—a beautiful old house that had been the residence of the Spanish Ambassadors in the seventeenth century—had a special attraction, associated as they were in my memory with bygone years, when my father had been accredited as Minister to Queen Sophia, and when I had lived there as a small boy.

As the Legation had to be refurnished from top to bottom, it was from Clingendaal, under whose hospitable roof so many an Anglo-Dutch friendship has been cemented, and under the auspices of our almost lifelong friend Baroness (Daisy) de Brienen, that we made our début in Dutch society, a society in which we soon found ourselves quite at home, thanks to the warm welcome extended to us. Many of its members, I am glad to think, still remain our friends, and among them none have given us more constant proofs of their friendly feelings than the present Netherlands Minister in London and his wife. Jonkheer van Swinderen was Minister for Foreign Affairs during all the time that I was at The Hague, and it was a real pleasure to me to have to transact my official business with a man of

his quick intelligence, mother wit and conciliatory disposition.

It was at the van Swinderens' house, where we were frequent guests, that I had the good fortune to meet ex-President Roosevelt, who was then making a tour of the European capitals. Our hostess—to whose sympathetic and attractive personality I would pay a passing tribute—had told him, in the course of luncheon, that I had recently translated the first part of *Faust* into English verse. On hearing this, Mr. Roosevelt at once engaged me in conversation across the table, and, beginning with the early English ballads, passed in rapid review all the great writers of English verse down to modern times. On my remarking that I considered Swinburne the greatest poet of our generation, he exclaimed: "There I am with you. When I was a young man," he went on, "I would walk in the woods after my day's work and recite that glorious chorus from 'Atalanta in Calydon,'" some half-dozen lines of which he then recited. Not to be outdone, I replied: "Well, Mr. Roosevelt, when I was a young man, crossed in love, I would declaim the lines in 'Dolores':

> Time turns the old days to derision,
> Our loves into corpses or wives."

"And," interrupted Mr. Roosevelt, without giving me time to finish:

> "Marriage and death and division
> Make barren our lives."

"What young man," he continued, thumping the table with his fist, "has not, when suffering the pangs

of despised love, given vent to his feelings in those words?"

As one could dine at the Legation and breakfast in London it was easy to pay flying visits to friends in England, and I remember more especially one visit which we paid the Berkeley Sheffields for the Doncaster Meeting in September, 1909—for it was at that meeting that I saw King Edward for the last time. His Majesty had sent for me after the running of the Leger, in which his horse Minoru, though a warm favourite, had been beaten, and, with the kindly interest which he had always shown in my career, asked me about our life at The Hague. After saying how happy we were there, I remarked that life in the Dutch capital was so calm and peaceful that I was afraid that I should end like Rip Van Winkle in Sleepy Hollow, and sleep away the remaining years of my diplomatic life. "You must not think that," said His Majesty, laughing. "Something is sure to turn up." It was but a few months after King Edward's death that the something which His Majesty had predicted *did* turn up and that I received the following letter from Sir Edward Grey:

FOREIGN OFFICE.
July 16, 1910.

MY DEAR BUCHANAN,—Sir Arthur Nicholson's transfer to the Foreign Office will make a vacancy at St. Petersburg. The place is one of great importance, as, though our relations with the Russian Government are happily cordial, there are questions which present difficulties for both Governments, which require constant tact and skill on the part of the Ambassador at St. Petersburg.

I am confident, from all I myself have seen and from all that I have heard from those who have had still longer experience of the Diplomatic Service than I have had, that

you would fill the post of Ambassador with success, and, if it would be agreeable to you, I should be very glad to recommend you for it.—Yours sincerely, E. GREY.

I had never dared aspire to such an important Embassy, and, in thanking Sir Edward for this signal proof of his confidence, I could but express the hope that I should prove worthy of it and that I should not disappoint his expectations. I had, fortunately, four months in which to work up the various questions with which I should have to deal; and it was only at the end of November, 1910, that I kissed hands on my appointment. King George, who had such a warm affection for the Emperor Nicholas, charged me with many messages for His Majesty and continued throughout the whole of my mission to honour me with his confidence and support.

CHAPTER VIII

1911

THOUGH the relations between the two Governments were, as Sir Edward Grey had pointed out in his letter to me, cordial, Russia and Great Britain were friends over whom still hung the shadow of past differences and misunderstandings. They had not yet cast aside the mutual suspicions with which they had for more than half a century regarded the trend of each other's policy. The Anglo-Russian understanding dated from the year 1907. It was founded on a somewhat loosely-worded document which, while binding the two Powers to maintain the integrity and independence of Persia and defining their respective spheres of interest in that country, said nothing about their relations in Europe. Framed with the immediate object of preventing Persia becoming an apple of discord between them, it nevertheless served to bring them nearer together and indirectly paved the way for their future collaboration in European questions. It proved, indeed, in the end more successful in promoting an understanding, that was outside the purview of the written agreement, than in reconciling their conflicting interests in Persia, which up to the very eve of the Great War occasioned constant friction.

On my arrival at St. Petersburg early in December, 1910, the international outlook, though giving no cause

for immediate anxiety, was not altogether reassuring. The Bosnia and Herzegovina crisis, in which M. Isvolsky had been worsted in his duel with Count Aehrenthal, had created in Russia a bitter feeling of resentment against Austria—a resentment that had been intensified by the former's personal dislike of Count Aehrenthal; while the danger of complications in the Balkans, that might bring Russia's interests into direct conflict with those of Austria, could not be overlooked. M. Sazonoff, who had just succeeded M. Isvolsky at the Russian Foreign Office, had, fortunately, no personal grudge against Count Aehrenthal, and even held that it might be better that he should remain in office for fear of his being succeeded by a Minister more amenable to German influence. All that he could do under the circumstances was to refrain from giving a hostile turn to his policy and to work for the gradual re-establishment of more normal relations between the two Governments. But what struck me most about the then existing situation was the fact that, though Russia's relations with Germany had been seriously strained ever since the Emperor William had in 1909 donned his shining armour in support of his Austrian ally, and though it was thanks to Germany that Count Aehrenthal had won the day, the Russian public took a more tolerant view of her action and did not harbour the same rancorous resentment against her as against Austria.

M. Sazonoff, whom I had known when he was counsellor of embassy in London, gave me a most cordial welcome on my paying him my first official visit, and we soon became fast friends. A Russian of the Russians when it was a question of defending his

THE EMPEROR NICHOLAS II

(From a photograph in the possession of Sir Ian Malcolm)

country's interests, he was always a staunch friend of Great Britain; and down to the last day of his tenure of the post of Foreign Minister—down to the end of July, 1916, when the Emperor, unfortunately for himself and for Russia, was so ill-advised as to replace him by M. Stürmer—I ever found in him a loyal and zealous collaborator for the maintenance of the Anglo-Russian understanding. We did not, as was but natural, always see eye to eye in the many intricate questions which we had to discuss during the next five years and a half, but he never resented my frank, outspoken language and invariably did all he could to smooth over difficulties. He had but recently returned from Potsdam, where, in his desire to relax the tension existing between the two Governments and to secure Germany's recognition of Russia's predominant position in Persia, he had been inveigled into negotiations about the Bagdad railway which were not in keeping with the understanding on which the other members of the Triple Entente had hitherto acted. This so-called Potsdam Agreement was the first of the many thorny questions which I had to discuss with Sazonoff. It also formed the subject of my first conversations with the Emperor. On presenting my letters of credence I had, after emphasizing the King's earnest wish to see the Anglo-Russian understanding maintained and consolidated, told the Emperor that His Majesty's Government were following the course of these Russo-German negotiations with some anxiety. His Majesty had assured me, in reply, that his Government would conclude no arrangement with Germany without first submitting it to His Majesty's Government, and that the latter could always count on his

assistance whenever they stood in need of it. He repeated these assurances in a further conversation which I had with him a few weeks later, and added that the pending negotiations with Germany would in no way affect his attitude towards Great Britain.

Though the Emperor was acting in perfect good faith, he failed to grasp the fact that the concessions which his Government were making to Germany with regard to the Bagdad railway were incompatible with the support which they were pledged to give their partners in the Triple Entente. It was not, as I subsequently endeavoured to impress on M. Sazonoff, that we had the slightest objection to Russia cultivating good relations with Germany, but that we were afraid that she was about to do so at our expense. Anxious as we were ourselves to come to an understanding with Germany on the subject of armaments, we should never, I assured him, think of taking any step that might entail the sacrifice of our friendship with Russia and France. We trusted, therefore, that the Russian Government would, in its dealings with Germany, show a like consideration for our interests.

In view of the historical interest attaching to them, I append a short account of the long-drawn-out negotiations which ensued between the Russian and German Governments. They entailed constant intervention on my part, as, had not the former Government realized in time that there was a point beyond which they could not go, the latter would have succeeded in causing a serious split in the ranks of the Entente Powers.

At the beginning of December, 1910, Sazonoff had submitted to the German Ambassador a draft

agreement embodying the substance of the Potsdam conversations. By the first of its articles Russia engaged not to oppose the realization of the Bagdad railway, nor to put any obstacle in the way of the participation of foreign capital in that enterprise, on the condition that she would not be required to make any pecuniary or economic sacrifices. By the second, she undertook to link up the Bagdad railway with the future North Persian railway system. By the third, Germany engaged neither to construct nor to give her material or diplomatic support to the construction of any railway in the zone situated between the Bagdad line and the Russian and Persian frontier to the north of Khanikin; while, by the fourth, she declared that she had no political interests in Persia; that she would but pursue there objects of a commercial character; that she recognized Russia's special political, strategical and economic interests in North Persia, and that she would not seek for any concession of a territorial character to the north of a line running from Kasri Chirin by Ispahan, Yezd and Khakh to the Afghan frontier, in the latitude of Ghazrik.

The engagement taken by Russian in the first article was, Sazonoff contended, to apply only to the Koniah-Bagdad section of the railway, and left the Russian Government free, as far as the Gulf section was concerned, to co-operate with Great Britain in the future, as in the past. Early in January the *Evening Times* published the text of the draft agreement, and in order to prove that this version was unauthentic the two Governments agreed to recast the whole text. The negotiations now turned mainly on the question of the linking up of the two railway systems, as

Germany was anxious to bind Russia to commence the construction of the linking-up line as soon as a branch line from Sadijeh had reached Khanikin. This question was complicated by the fact that Russian public opinion proved to be opposed to the expenditure of money on a railway that was to open the Persian markets to German trade, before provision was made for the construction of a railway from Enzeli to Tehran that would render a similar service to Russian goods. In order to get over this difficulty M. Sazonoff suggested that British and French financiers should finance the construction of both the Enzeli–Tehran and the Khanikin–Tehran lines; but, in the absence of any guarantee from the Russian Government, this suggestion could not be entertained. The only other alternative—that of allowing the Germans to build the railway—was opposed by us on the ground that the Germans would then get the control of the railway into their own hands, with the result that they might use it for the transport of troops. On February 21 Sazonoff handed the German Ambassador a revised draft, under which Russia engaged to obtain a concession for the linking-up line as soon as the Sadijeh–Khanikin branch line had been completed, while the text of the first article of the original draft was modified so as to restrict Russia's engagement—not to oppose the realization of the Bagdad railway—to the Koniah–Bagdad section. Russia also stipulated that, in the event of her ceding her rights in the linking-up line to any third party, all the other clauses of the agreement should still remain in force.

The negotiations were interrupted, owing to the serious illness that incapacitated Sazonoff for over

nine months, but were resumed later on by the acting Foreign Minister, M. Neratoff, who in July submitted a further amended draft.

The progress of the negotiations was now somewhat accelerated, as both Governments had special reasons for bringing them to a speedy conclusion. Germany, on the one hand, was engaged in a delicate conversation with France on the subject of Morocco, and considered the moment well chosen for the publication of an agreement which would, she hoped, demonstrate the intimate character of her relations with France's ally. Russia, on the other hand, was anxious—in view of the internal conflict that had broken out in Persia—to secure a declaration of Germany's *désinteressement* in that country, so that she might have a freer hand to deal with the situation should intervention become necessary. Germany declined to accept the restricted interpretation placed by Russia on the term "Bagdad Railway" or to consent to the retention in the agreement of Article III of the original draft, under which she was to engage not to construct any railway in the zone north of Khanikin. The German Ambassador did, however, give a categorical verbal assurance, on the part of the Emperor William, that Germany would only construct in that zone such railways as she was entitled to build under the Bagdad railway concession. She further claimed the right to obtain for herself the concession for the Khanikin-Tehran railway, should Russia, or the finance syndicate to whom she might cede her rights, fail to commence its construction within two years of the completion of the Sadijeh–Khanikin branch line. All her demands were, in the end, conceded, and the agreement as finally signed was

a diplomatic victory for Germany. The initial mistake committed by Sazonoff, in allowing himself to be entrapped during his conversations with M. Kiderlen-Waechter into giving verbal assurances, of which he did not at the time realize the full significance, was never retrieved. He had pledged Russia, without previous consultation with Great Britain and France, to withdraw her opposition to the Bagdad railway scheme, and, though he subsequently endeavoured to restrict this engagement to the Koniah–Bagdad section, it was clear from the outset that Germany would hold him to the strict letter of his bond.

Whether, in thus accelerating the final stage of these negotiations, the Russian Government were prompted or not by the desire to be relieved of all apprehensions as to Germany's attitude in the event of their embarking on a policy of active intervention in Persia, the signature of the Russo-German agreement was shortly followed by a change for the worse in their relations with that country. This change was primarily due to the fact that the Persian Government had, in spite of Russia's repeated remonstrances, taken Mr. Shuster and other American advisers into their service. One of Mr. Shuster's first acts was to entrust Major Stokes (at one time British military attaché at Tehran) with the task of organizing a treasury gendarmerie. The appointment of a British officer to the command of a gendarmerie, whose operations were to extend over the whole of Persia, including the Russian sphere in the north, was resented by the Russian Government as a violation of the Anglo-Russian understanding; and it was only by making strong representations at Tehran, which resulted in the appointment

being left in abeyance, that we were able to convince them of our good faith.

But hardly had this incident been happily closed when Mr. Shuster's disregard of Russia's privileged position in Persia provoked a still more serious crisis. Bent, as he was, on securing for himself an absolutely free hand with regard to loans and railway concessions, he gave her serious offence by appointing an Englishman (Mr. Lecoffre) as treasury agent at Tabriz; and in November he brought matters to a head by seizing a property belonging to Shoa es Sultaneh that had been mortgaged to the Russian bank, and by replacing the Persian Cossacks on guard there by treasury gendarmes. The Russian Government at once presented an ultimatum demanding an apology and the reinstatement of the Persian Cossacks within forty-eight hours; and, as the Persian Government, in order to avoid compliance with these demands, resigned, orders were given for the despatch to Kaswin of a force sufficiently strong to enable a detachment being eventually sent to occupy Tehran.

It was in vain that I endeavoured to impress on the acting Minister for Foreign Affairs the serious consequences which an occupation of Tehran might have for the maintenance of the Anglo-Russian understanding. While assuring me that Russia had no intention of violating the principle of Persian integrity, he not only refused to cancel the orders already given, but told me that, unless the Persian Government complied with the terms of the ultimatum before the Russian troops landed on Persian territory, further demands would be presented. With M. Kokovtsoff, who had recently succeeded M. Stolypin as President of the Council, I

was more successful; and, after Neratoff's uncompromising language, I was agreeably surprised to receive from him the unqualified assurance that, as soon as the two original Russian demands had been conceded, the Russian troops would be recalled. M. Kokovtsoff, however, had counted without his colleagues in the Government. The Russian troops having, meanwhile, landed at Enzeli, a second ultimatum was despatched, demanding a refund of the cost of the military expedition, the dismissal of Mr. Shuster and Mr. Lecoffre, and an engagement that the Persian Government would not in future take any foreigners into their service without the previous consent of the Russian and British Governments.

The despatch of this second ultimatum, in the teeth of the categorical assurances given me by the President of the Council, naturally evoked a protest from His Majesty's Government; and in my conversations with M. Neratoff I once more endeavoured to dissuade him from an occupation of Tehran, which would, as I reminded him, be regarded in England as a blow struck at the independence of Persia, and consequently at our understanding with Russia. Neratoff, notwithstanding, remained obdurate on this point, and at the same time declined to sanction a statement being made in the House of Commons to the effect that the two Governments had agreed under no circumstances to recognize the ex-Shah Mohammed Ali, who had recently returned to Persia. It was only after Sazonoff had, towards the middle of December, resumed the direction of foreign affairs that the tension between the two Governments relaxed and that the Russian demands, as the result of further

negotiations, were toned down. They were accepted by the Persian Government before the end of the year, though, owing to the outbreak of serious disturbances in North Persia, the promised recall of the Russian troops from Kaswin had to be postponed.

I have recorded the above incidents in order to show how difficult it sometimes was for the two Governments to act in concert owing to the diametrically opposite standpoints from which the situation was viewed by public opinion in their respective countries. In Russia the despatch of troops to Kaswin and the contemplated occupation of Tehran were regarded as measures which it was incumbent on her to take for the vindication of her outraged honour. In England, on the contrary, they were condemned as an unjustifiable attempt to bring a weak country into subjection and as a violation of its integrity and independence. So acute was the divergence of views that, had not the Persian Government yielded before the order was given for an advance on Tehran, the Anglo-Russian understanding would with difficulty have borne the strain. Fortunately, both Sir Edward Grey and M. Sazonoff were statesmen endowed with the gifts of tact, patience and forbearance, so necessary for the conduct of delicate negotiations; and, though it is now the custom to depreciate the services of the Old Diplomacy, I doubt whether the vaunted New Diplomacy would have been equally successful in saving the Anglo-Russian understanding from the shipwreck with which it was more than once threatened.

My personal efforts were naturally directed to reconciling as far as possible the conflicting views and interests of the two Governments; but I was hampered

in this task by the absence of any solidarity or collective responsibility between the members of the Russian Cabinet. The categorical assurances given me by the President of the Council respecting the recall of the Russian troops were, as already stated, disregarded by his colleagues, and the reason for this very unusual procedure was only made clear to me a few months later, when a Blue Book on Persia was about to be presented to Parliament. In submitting to Sazonoff, in accordance with diplomatic usage, the proofs of my despatches, I had been careful to tone down the reports of my conversations with M. Kokovtsoff so that it should not appear that he had failed to give effect to his promises. Sazonoff, who was fully acquainted with what had passed in the course of those conversations, at once took me to task for having appealed to the President of the Council in a matter which only concerned the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

As the Minister, or, in his absence, the acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, was alone responsible to the Emperor for the direction of Russia's foreign policy, Sazonoff strongly objected to the publication in a Blue Book of despatches reporting conversations with another Minister about the affairs of a department with which that Minister was in no way connected. I had been wrong, he declared, in discussing the Persian question with the President of the Council, and the latter had exceeded his powers in giving me assurances which he was not competent to give. I objected that the Russian Ambassador in London frequently discussed foreign affairs with the Prime Minister, and that, when it was a question which vitally affected the relations of our two countries, it

was but natural that I should consult the President of the Council, more especially as an acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, not being a member of the Cabinet, could not speak with the same authority as the head of his Government. Though Sazonoff had never objected to my taking this course when his brother-in-law, Stolypin, was at the head of the Government, he merely replied that Russia was not a parliamentary country like Great Britain, and that the President of the Council had no control over Russia's foreign policy.

Of the other questions with which I had to deal during the course of the year, by far the most important was the right claimed by Russia to extend her maritime jurisdiction from three to twelve miles. In January and March bills had been introduced in the Duma forbidding foreigners to fish within twelve miles of the coasts of the Archangel Government and of the Pri Amur respectively, and as this claim was contrary to recognized practice and to the generally accepted principles of international law, I was instructed to protest. In their reply to this protest the Russian Government contended that the question of the extent of the territorial waters of a State was determined either by international treaties or by internal legislation; that, when it was determined in the latter manner, the limit fixed might differ in the case of customs, fisheries, criminal or civil jurisdiction, according to the requirements of their several interests; and that, as Russia was not bound by any treaty obligations, the extent of her territorial waters, from the point of view of international law, could only be determined by the range of the coastal guns—a range which exceeded

twelve miles. They suggested, however, that the question might be submitted to the third Peace Conference, which was to meet at The Hague in 1915. While expressing our willingness to discuss in an international conference the limits within which territorial jurisdiction could be exercised by any State over the waters adjacent to its shores, we attached the condition that, until such a conference had arrived at a decision, the Russian Government should not interfere with British vessels outside the existing three miles limit without a previous agreement with us. In a conversation which I had with him on the subject, Stolypin declared that this was a condition which the Russian Government could not accept, as in the opinion of their law officers there was no rule in international law that precluded Russia from acting as she proposed. He could not, therefore, promise to do more than to endeavour to adjourn the discusssion of the bills in the Duma till the autumn session.

The arguments advanced by the Russian Government in support of their claim were refuted in a succession of notes, in one of which they were reminded that they had themselves, in an official note addressed to Lord A. Loftus in October, 1874, recognized three miles as the limit of the maritime jurisdiction of a State, and had admitted that the question of such jurisdiction "*rentre dans la catégorie de celles, qui dans l'intérêt des bonnes rélations internationales, il serait désirable de voir réglées par un commun accord entre les Etats.*"

The Pri Amur bill was passed, both by the Duma and the Council of Empire, in June, with the result that Japan at once entered an official protest against its application; but the discussion with regard to the Arch-

angel fisheries bill was not pressed to a division. While declining to withdraw it, the Government did nothing to accelerate its passage, and as a considerable number of deputies were unwilling to press a measure that was calculated to cause friction with Great Britain, the bill eventually died a natural death.

In one of my conversations with the President of the Council in which, after discussing Russia's claim to an extension of her maritime jurisdiction, I had taken occasion to press for the settlement of two other pending questions, M. Stolypin exclaimed: "*Vraiment, M. l'Ambassadeur, vous n'êtes pas en veine! Voilà la troisième question désagréable que vous me posez aujourd'hui.*" M. Stolypin was right. I had fallen on troublous times, for during this, my first, year at St. Petersburg there was a constant succession of disagreeable questions about which I had to make representations to the Russian Government. One of them—a typical one—deserves a passing reference.

Early in April the Russian Press published the report of the trial of a former employee in the Ministry of Marine accused of having sold a secret signal book to Captain Calthorpe, naval attaché to His Majesty's Embassy, in 1903, and of having subsequently, in 1909, communicated a further signal book, together with other secret documents, to his successor, Captain Aubrey Smith. In the course of his examination this man, Povagé, admitted that he had tried to sell a signal book to Captain Calthorpe, who had, however, declined to take it. He declared, however, on oath that he had never seen Captain Smith in his life. The court found him guilty on all counts, but as, owing to

the lapse of time, he was exempted by statutory rules from punishment on the first count, he was condemned on the second to twelve years' hard labour.

I at once entered a strong protest. I pointed out that the judicial authorities had failed to inform the Embassy, as they ought to have done, that a trial was about to take place in which serious charges were to be brought against the British naval attaché; and, after giving my word of honour that there was not a particle of truth in the whole story, I requested the acting Minister for Foreign Affairs to publish an official *démenti* of certain unfounded statements made by some of the witnesses for the prosecution. While admitting that the judicial authorities ought to have given the Embassy notice of the impending trial, and while promising to inform the Emperor of all that I had said, M. Neratoff, instead of publishing an official *démenti* on behalf of the Russian Government, merely communicated to the Press a statement that the British Ambassador had denied in the most categorical manner that Captain Aubrey Smith had ever had any dealings with Povagé. The Emperor, who happened to be receiving Colonel Wyndham, our military attaché, in audience the following day, said that he was completely satisfied with my assurances and that, so far as he was concerned, the incident was closed. In spite of the repeated remonstrances which I addressed to the Russian Government on behalf of His Majesty's Government, and in spite of the fact that we could prove that Captain Smith had been absent from St. Petersburg on two occasions when Povagé was said to have visited him in his flat, this was the only satisfaction which Captain Smith ever received.

CHAPTER IX

1912–1914

IN spite of the critical phases through which our understanding with Russia had passed in 1911, the two countries were nevertheless gradually being drawn nearer each other, and the warm welcome accorded to an influential and thoroughly representative British delegation, which visited St. Petersburg and Moscow in February, 1912, marked a fresh milestone on the road to Anglo-Russian friendship. Unfortunately the Speaker of the House of Commons, Mr. Lowther (now Lord Ullswater), who was to have headed the delegation, was at the last moment prevented coming, owing to his father's death, but his place was ably filled by Lord Weardale.

On the night of their arrival I gave a dinner at the Embassy, to which I invited all the members of the Government, representatives of the army and navy, and the leaders of the constitutional groups in both the Duma and the Council of Empire, with the exception of the leader of the cadets, M. Miliukoff, whom some of the Ministers declined to meet. In my speech welcoming them to Russia, I laid stress on the fact that it was not on diplomatic acts, but on the surer foundation of mutual sympathy, friendship and confidence, and on a community of interests, that we must endeavour to build up a real and lasting understanding with Russia.

This was the keynote of nearly all the speeches delivered at the successive banquets given in their honour. On one or two occasions, however, and notably at the dinner given by the Duma and the Council of Empire, the speakers on either side went considerably farther. At the last-named dinner I was asked by the President of the Duma to return thanks for the toast of the Crimean veterans that was to be proposed by a Russian general, but excused myself on the ground that there was but one reply that I could make to such a toast, namely, that we had in the Crimean War learned to respect each other as brave and generous foemen, but that, should we ever be engaged in another war, we would, I trusted, find ourselves fighting shoulder to shoulder against the common enemy. It was with much difficulty that I induced President Rodzianko to entrust the duty of replying to this toast to someone who had not to weigh his words with the same care as myself. Sir E. Bethune's name was eventually coupled with it, and the gallant general, rushing in where I had feared to tread, delighted the Russians by replying in almost the identical words which I had forecasted, and was, in consequence, taken severely to task by the German Press.

It was not, however, so much by its speeches that the British delegation promoted a better understanding between the two countries, as by the personal contact which those of its members, who represented the Church, the parliament, the army and the navy of Great Britain established with the Russian naval, military, parliamentary and ecclesiastical authorities; for between nations, as between individuals, personal contact helps more than anything else to establish good

THE BRITISH EMBASSY, ST. PETERSBURG

THE KREMLIN, MOSCOW

relations. In the same way, the visit which M. Sazonoff paid in September to the King at Balmoral, and the conversations which he had there with Sir Edward Grey, laid the foundation for that close collaboration between the two Governments, which alone prevented the Balkan conflagration of 1912–13 spreading over Europe. Before, however, attempting to follow them through the various stages of the Balkan War, it will be well first to clear the ground of all the other questions which engaged their attention down to the outbreak of the Great War.

Though with the return of M. Sazonoff in restored health to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs at the close of 1911, the Persian question lost much of the acuteness which had characterized it during the latter half of that year, it continued, nevertheless, to provoke constant friction and misunderstandings between the two Governments. In speaking to me of the situation early in 1912, the Emperor remarked that the Persian Government was so weak, and the country in such a state of anarchy, that order would never be restored without the assistance of Russian troops in the north and of British troops in the south. When once they had accomplished this task they could be replaced by a small Persian army capable of maintaining the order which they had established. His Majesty further expressed his regret that the sincerity of the assurances given by his Government was doubted in certain quarters in England, adding that, when he gave his word that Russia would not annex any Persian territory, His Majesty's Government might rest assured that that word would not be broken.

But while both the Emperor and M. Sazonoff were

really anxious to re-establish normal and correct relations with Persia, the Russian consuls in that country favoured a forward policy and acted in an entirely contrary spirit. The consul-general at Meshed, Prince Dabija, was directly responsible for the bombardment and desecration of the shrine of that town; while his colleagues at other places, such as Tabriz, did not hesitate to provoke disorders that might serve as a pretext for Russian intervention. In their reports to their Government they so successfully misrepresented the origin and character of these disturbances that Sazonoff even threatened that Russia would have to take over the administration of Northern Azerbaijan, if the Persian Government failed to maintain order at Tabriz. How difficult it was for the two Governments to work together in Persia will be seen from the following extract from a private letter, which I wrote to Sir Edward Grey after having been instructed to warn the Russian Government of the serious consequences which might ensue from any such action on their part:

As Sazonoff could not see me yesterday, I communicated to him, in a private letter, what you had instructed me to tell him respecting a possible assumption by Russia of the administration of Northern Azerbaijan.

You will have already learned from the telegraphic report of the conversation, which I had with him this morning, that this is a step which he only contemplated taking in the very last resort, and that he trusts that it may be averted altogether if the Persians will consent to leave Shuja ed Dowleh at Tabriz as deputy-governor.

After giving me the above explanation, Sazonoff proceeded to speak with some heat of what you had said with regard to the Anglo-Russian understanding. That understanding, he remarked, was the Alpha and Omega of his

policy, and he only regretted that it had been Isvolsky, and not himself, who had put his signature to it. Its maintenance was essential to the vital interests of the two countries, and, were it to break down, German hegemony would at once be established in Europe. In order to maintain it and to meet the wishes of His Majesty's Government, he had, in defiance of Russian public opinion, stopped the advance of the Russian troops on Tehran, facilitated an amicable arrangement with the Persian Government, consented to the joint advance of £200,000, sacrificed the ex-Shah, and, in fact, done everything which we had asked him to do.

I here interrupted him by remarking that, while fully appreciating the loyal manner in which he had co-operated with us, I must remind him of the very difficult position in which you had been placed by Russia's action in Persia. Public opinion in Russia was a very different thing to what it was in a constitutional country like England, where it was voiced in Parliament; and I could tell him that there was a moment when there was such a strong feeling against the military measures undertaken by Russia in Persia that, in spite of your earnest desire to maintain the Anglo-Russian understanding intact, you had almost despaired of being able to defend it.

Sazonoff replied that I made a mistake in underestimating the weight of public opinion in this country and the difficulties with which he had been confronted. Not only had he been attacked in the Press, but he had been reproached in other quarters with sacrificing Russia's interests at our dictation. He had had to overcome considerable opposition in the Council of Ministers, and after the attacks made on the Russian troops at Tabriz last December he had received three letters telling him that he was not fit to direct Russian foreign policy and threatening his life. He was determined to maintain the principle on which the Anglo-Russian understanding was based, and he had not the least desire to assume the administration of Northern Azerbaijan; but if the Russian troops were again attacked he would be forced to do it. We must have more

confidence in each other, and His Majesty's Government must believe that, whatever provisional measures Russia might be forced to take in self-defence, she had not the slightest intention of annexing a single yard of Persian territory. Each of the two parties to the agreement of 1907 must, while adhering to its general lines and principles, be allowed a certain latitude as to the measures which either might judge it necessary to adopt in its respective sphere of influence, for Russian public opinion would be estranged did it become known that its Government was being lectured like a child at every step which it took to safeguard its interests.

I told Sazonoff that I fully recognized the difficulties of his position, but that, in my opinion, the principal cause of the misunderstandings which occasionally arose between us lay in the fact that, while the two Governments were doing their best to act loyally together, the Russian consuls in Persia acted in a contrary spirit. When, as had more than once been the case, he had told me that disorders had broken out at Meshed or at Tabriz that had necessitated the intervention of Russian troops, I had never felt quite sure, in my own mind, whether those disorders had not been wilfully provoked by one or other of the consuls in order to provide an excuse for intervention.

Sazonoff declined to admit this. He declared that Müller, his consul at Tabriz, who is now on leave, was an excellent man, and contended that the version given by Dabija of the Meshed incident was correct. I disputed this, and said that Sykes had reported that some eight men had been killed in the sacred chamber itself by maxim fire, and that he had, by a personal visit to the tomb, corroborated the fact of shots having been fired within the shrine itself. Sazonoff replied that he could show me the reports which he had received that stated the exact contrary. The dome of the shrine had alone been injured, and the action of the Russian troops in attacking the sanctuary, outside the shrine, had been amply justified by the fact that the agitators had used it as a base of operations against them. The Emperor, he added, had been much

annoyed by the manner in which this incident had been distorted.

Finally, Sazonoff said that he had shown his good intentions by recalling Pokhitonoff, and that he would have no objection to recalling Dabija at the first suitable opportunity. He could not, however, do so immediately, as otherwise it would appear as if he were acting under pressure. He would much prefer, however, that Sykes should be moved at the same time.

We shall never, I fear, be able to work harmoniously with Russia till several changes are effected in the Russian consular service in Persia; but Sazonoff is not strong enough to effect these changes unaided. He is obliged to consider his own position, which is none too secure, and I therefore think that it would be politic on our part to offer to move one or two of our consuls as an act of reciprocity. The Persian Minister here has repeatedly told me that he has implicit confidence in Sazonoff's loyalty and good intentions, but that he is too heavily handicapped owing to the manner in which the consuls, as well as some of the subordinate officials in his Ministry, disobey his instructions.

Persia was naturally one of the questions discussed by Sir E. Grey and M. Sazonoff at Balmoral. Though they were agreed in principle as to the necessity of establishing a strong government at Tehran with a properly organized force to maintain order, the subsequent negotiations came to nothing owing to the difficulty of finding the right man to place at the head of such a government, as well as of providing the funds necessary for the formation of a gendarmerie under foreign officers. Meanwhile the Russian consuls continued to arrogate to themselves more and more administrative powers, while the representations which I had to make on the subject did but serve to accentuate the divergence of views held in London and St. Peters-

burg with regard to the interpretation to be placed on the 1907 agreement. Russia, on the one hand, desired more elbow room and freedom of action in North Persia, where she had thousands of subjects or protected subjects, and where the trade was entirely in her hands. She was willing to allow us to do what we liked in our own sphere provided that we refrained from exercising a sort of inquisitorial control over her actions in the Russian sphere. She also thought that the time had come for what would virtually have amounted to the partition of the neutral zone, and suggested that the clause relating to it should be modified by an exchange of secret notes. His Majesty's Government, on the other hand, had constantly in view the maintenance of Persia's integrity and independence. While naturally concerned with the protection of British economic interests in the neutral zone, they had no wish to enlarge the sphere of their own responsibilities or to see Russian political influence extended over its northern portion. They therefore merely expressed their readiness to take into consideration any proposals which the Russian Government might submit with a view to effecting a clearer definition of British and Russian interests in that zone.

The situation created by the action of the Russian consuls at last became so serious that I was instructed at the end of June, 1914, to ask for an audience in order to impress on the Emperor the grave preoccupation which it was causing His Majesty's Government.

On His Majesty's inquiring whether their anxiety had been caused by anything that had happened recently, I replied that I had already, a year ago, advocated a frank exchange of views between the two

Governments, as I was even then afraid that the trend of events in North Persia would end by creating a situation that might prove fatal to the Anglo-Russian understanding. Events had since been moving fast, and North Persia was now to all intents and purposes a Russian province. We did not, I proceeded to say, for a moment doubt His Majesty's assurance that he would not annex any portion of Persian territory. We were but recording actual facts. Unforeseen events had led to the occupation of certain districts in North Persia by Russian troops, and, little by little, the whole machinery of the administration had been placed in the hands of the Russian consuls. The Governor-General of Azerbaijan was a mere puppet who received and carried out the orders of the Russian consul-general, and the same might be said of the Governors at Resht, Kazwin and Julfa. They were one and all agents of the Russian Government and acted in entire independence of the central government at Tehran. Vast tracts of land in North Persia were being acquired by illegal methods, large numbers of Persians were being converted into Russian-protected subjects, and the taxes were being collected by the Russian consuls to the exclusion of the agents of the Persian financial administration. The above system was being extended to Ispahan and even to the neutral zone. We had not the slightest desire to dispute Russia's predominant interests and position in the north, but we did take exception to the methods by which that predominance was being asserted and the attempts which were being made to extend it to the neutral zone. I concluded by reminding the Emperor that, without the support of Parliament, no British Government could maintain

the Anglo-Russian understanding, and that, unfortunately, the sympathies of Liberals and Conservatives alike were being alienated by what was happening in North Persia.

The Emperor, after listening attentively to what I had said, replied that the present situation in North Persia had been brought about by circumstances which the Russian Government could not control. It had originated with the troubles caused by the Fedais in Tabriz and by the necessity which had subsequently arisen of safeguarding Russia's interests in the north. No one regretted this necessity more than himself. In the first place he could give me his word of honour that he sincerely desired to withdraw his troops, and, in the second, he felt that he was laying himself open to the suspicion of acting contrary to his assurances. He quite understood the motives which had prompted the representations of His Majesty's Government, and he would welcome a frank exchange of views as calculated to remove the danger of any possible misunderstanding in the future. The first thing, however, to be done was to control the action of his consuls, and he would cause the whole matter to be inquired into by a committee at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The Emperor then turned the conversation on to the question of the neutral zone, remarking that the simplest manner of defining our respective positions with regard to it was to partition it. On my replying that, though I quite agreed that the two Governments ought to come to an understanding as to what they were respectively entitled to do in that zone, His Majesty's Government had no desire to extend their responsibilities, the Emperor said that it might in any case be

necessary to revise the agreement of 1907. He was quite ready to consent to this if His Majesty's Government desired it. As I took leave of His Majesty at the close of my audience, the Emperor said: "I can only tell you, as I have so often told you before, that my one desire is to remain firm friends with England and, if I can prevent it, nothing shall stand in the way of the closest possible understanding between our two countries."

I, personally, was strongly in favour of a revision of the 1907 agreement, as nothing was more calculated in my opinion to create tension between the two countries than to leave the neutral zone a debatable land. To do so would but occasion constant bickerings and mutual recriminations in the future. As it was, their respective economic interests in it were constantly clashing, more especially as regarded the construction of railways. While British syndicates were anxious to obtain concessions for certain lines, the Russian Government objected to the construction of any such railways near the Russian zone, for fear that the Persian markets would be flooded with seaborne British goods to the detriment of Russia's trade.

On the other hand, the Russian Government strongly favoured the idea of a Trans-Persian railway that, when linked up with the Russian and the Indian railway systems, would serve as a transit route between Europe on the one side and India and Australasia on the other. Early in 1912 they submitted a scheme for such a railway to His Majesty's Government, who accepted it in principle under certain reserves, with the result that a Société des Etudes was eventually formed

to consider the questions of alignment and finance. During the two years which followed there were intermittent conversations between the two Governments on the subject of the alignment. No agreement was, however, reached, as, while His Majesty's Government insisted on the line entering the British sphere at Bunder Abbas via Ispahan and Shiraz, and on its not being prolonged to Karachi without their formal consent, the Russian Government held out for the more direct route via Tehran and Kerman to Chahbar, which they maintained was the only point on the South Persian coast where a good harbour could be constructed. But leaving the alignment question out of account, the chances of raising the necessary capital were so remote that, even had the war not intervened, it is very doubtful if the scheme would have materialized.

CHAPTER X

1912–1913

EVENTS were, meanwhile, moving fast in the Balkans, where the Turco-Italian War had engendered an unrest which proved to be but the precursor of a general upheaval. The crisis which ensued not only brought the interests of Russia into direct conflict with those of Austria, but threatened on more than one occasion to endanger European peace.

The death of Count Aehrenthal, and the appointment of Count Berchtold as his successor, had effected a distinct improvement in Austro-Russian relations, for the latter had, as Austrian Ambassador at St. Petersburg during the Bosnia crisis of 1908–9, acquitted himself of his difficult mission with such tact and discretion that the sins of his Government were not visited on him. Though destined to play so fateful and uncompromising a part in the negotiations which preceded the Great War, he was a *persona grata* at the Russian Court, and this fact had helped to relax the existing tension. The very question, moreover, which was at the root of their mutual jealousies served, curiously enough for a time, to bring the two Governments into closer contact till, as it became more acute, their relations again grew dangerously strained.

In an audience, which I had with the Emperor early in 1912, His Majesty told me that he was seriously pre-

occupied by the situation in the Balkans, as, though anxious to maintain friendly relations with Turkey, he could not remain a disinterested spectator of a war between that Power and one of the Balkan States. He therefore suggested that the Powers of the Triple Entente should consult together beforehand so as to be prepared with a united plan of action, in the event of their being suddenly confronted with a Balkan war or with a forward movement on the part of Austria. No practical steps were taken to give effect to this suggestion; for, as I told the Emperor, we wished to avoid taking any step that might split up Europe into two hostile camps. We should, I added, prefer to see Austria and Russia, as the two Powers most directly interested, come to some agreement to which all the other Powers could become parties. Russian diplomacy, meanwhile, was not idle, and in February, 1912, as I learned later in the year, Bulgaria and Serbia signed a treaty of defensive alliance guaranteeing the integrity of their respective territories in the event of either of them being attacked by Austria, Roumania or any other Power. By a secret military convention attached to this treaty provision was made for the number of troops to be furnished by each of the two contracting parties in such a defensive war, as well as for the disposal of their respective armies and for the plan of campaign to be adopted in the event of their both being engaged in war with Turkey.

By a further secret "annexe" they determined their respective spheres of influence in Macedonia, while they agreed that any difference respecting the execution or interpretation of the treaty should be referred to Russia for decision. The presence of mem-

bers of the Greek and Montenegrin royal families at the coming of age festivities of the Crown Prince Boris, which were celebrated shortly afterwards at Sofia, prepared the ground for the conclusion of treaties of a somewhat similar character with Greece and Montenegro. With the signature of these treaties the Balkan Confederation, for which Russia had so long been working, became an accomplished fact. For it was at her inspiration that Serbia and Bulgaria had concluded a treaty of alliance, that was to bring together two Slav races who had for years past been cutting each other's throat in Macedonia, and that the Balkan Confederation had been finally constituted. It would, she fondly believed, prove a docile instrument in her hands and serve the double purpose of maintaining peace in the Balkans and of barring an Austrian advance to the Ægean.

It was not long, however, before the hopes which she had founded on it as an instrument of peace were rudely shaken. Early in July the first note of warning was sounded by the Russian Minister in Sofia, who reported that the military conspiracy in Turkey and the Albanian insurrection had given rise to a dangerous movement in Bulgaria in favour of armed intervention. Proposals for allaying the threatening storm were successively submitted by M. Sazonoff and Count Berchtold; but, though the latter's programme, in so far as it was based on the maintenance of the territorial *status quo* and on the pacific development of the Balkan States, did not fail to evoke an official expression of satisfaction from St. Petersburg, the Russian Government were anything but pleased with the initiative thus taken by Austria. She was suspected of wishing to

pose as the patron of the Balkan States, a rôle to which Russia laid an exclusive claim. By September the attitude of the Bulgarian Government had become so threatening that they were warned that, if they attacked Turkey, Russia would consider her historic mission at an end and leave Bulgaria to her fate. Sazonoff at the same time made, with the support of His Majesty's Government, strong representations at Constantinople urging the Porte to lose no time in initiating reforms of a far-reaching character.

Curiously enough, however, on his proceeding to Balmoral at the end of the month, Sazonoff never once, despite the growing gravity of the situation, suggested our bringing stronger pressure to bear on the Porte, while the official *communiqué* recording the purport of his conversations with Sir Edward Grey, made but a passing reference to the Balkan crisis. The consequence was that the Russian public, who had founded all their hopes on the Balmoral meeting, most unjustly attributed the subsequent serious turn of events to the lack of support which Russia had received from Great Britain. Even, however, had their hopes been realized and had the Balmoral meeting led to the adoption of some more drastic action at Constantinople, it would have been too late. Before Sazonoff had left London the order for the mobilization of the Bulgarian army had been issued, and before he reached St. Petersburg war had been formally declared.

All the efforts of the Russian Government were now directed to localizing the war and to averting an Austrian occupation of the Sanjak, a breach of neutrality that would inevitably have entailed Russia's interven-

tion. They at once announced their determination of upholding the principle of the territorial *status quo*, while they gave the most positive assurances at Vienna that Russia would not intervene if Austria abstained from doing so. Austria, on her part, engaged to restrict her action to the concentration of troops near the Serbian frontier, so that the two Governments were for a time able to act more or less in concert. The policy thus enunciated was not, however, long maintained. Towards the end of October the Emperor, who was entertaining a shooting party at Spala that included the Grand Duke Nicholas and other generals, sent for Sazonoff and said that he desired to afford the Balkan States all the assistance in his power short of involving Russia in any serious entanglements. This audience marked a turning point in the attitude of the Russian Government. They had at first viewed with a certain apprehension the idea of a Bulgarian expansion eastwards and had insisted that the future Turco-Bulgarian frontier should be drawn to the north of Adrianople. They had even approached His Majesty's Government with a proposal for mediation and had submitted a programme of the reforms to be eventually introduced into European Turkey; but before either of these proposals could materialize, the battle of Lule-Burgas had been fought and won and the Balkan Allies had declared that they would not return home empty-handed.

The task of championing the far-reaching claims of the Balkan States was now assumed by Russia; and M. Sazonoff, early in November, formulated his views respecting the prospective changes in the territorial *status quo* as follows:

Turkey to retain possession of Constantinople, with the territory comprised within the Enos-Midia line, and the rest of her European provinces to be divided by right of conquest among the Balkan States; Serbia to acquire, in accordance with the terms of the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty of 1912, Uskub and a slice of territory extending down to Lake Ochrida, to secure possession of San Giovanni di Medua, and to obtain access to the sea by means of a corridor that would give her direct access to that port; Albania to be made an autonomous province; Montenegro to be given the Sanjak; Roumania to be compensated for her neutrality by a rectification of her frontier on the side of the Dobrudja; Salonica to be converted into a free port, and Mount Athos to be neutralized as a purely monastic settlement.

In drawing up this programme Sazonoff had hoped that Bulgaria would consent to compensate Roumania by a slight concession of territory and that Austria's opposition to a Serbian port on the Adriatic could be bought off by a guarantee of her economic access to the Ægean. Both these expectations proved fallacious, and the latter question was unfortunately allowed to assume proportions which at one moment were fraught with danger to the peace of Europe. The Russian Government had, moreover, given their unqualified support to Serbia's claims under the erroneous impression that, even were Austria to prove troublesome, Germany was so bent on peace that she would not support her ally in any action likely to provoke international complications. Germany's relations with Russia were still referred to in all official utterances as those of traditional friendship, and in spite of the part which she had played in the Bosnia crisis, the Emperor Nicholas did not, as he himself told me, regard her with mistrust. Confidence in Germany's pacific inten-

tions had been further strengthened by the meeting of the two Emperors at Port Baltic, where the personality of the German Chancellor had so favourably impressed both the Emperor and Sazonoff that too large an interpretation had been placed on M. Bethmann-Hollweg's assurances that Germany would not support Austria in a forward policy in the Balkans.

It was, therefore, an unpleasant surprise for the Russian Government when the German Ambassador, after inquiring whether Russia proposed to treat the question of a Serbian post as a *Kraftprobe* (trial of strength), used language that left no doubt as to what Germany would do in the event of an Austro-Russian war. Sazonoff, in reply, reminded Count Pourtales that there had been such trials of strength both in 1909 and 1911, and that, if Germany contemplated acting towards Russia in the spirit of her Agadir policy, the consequences might be very serious. The Russian Government, however, had no wish to push matters too far, as they realized that, were Austria to attempt to expel Serbia from any port of which she had taken possession, Russia would be compelled to intervene. They therefore gave counsels of moderation at Belgrade and informed the German Ambassador that, though Serbia must be emancipated from her position of dependence on other Powers, the question of how this result was to be achieved might be left over for discussion by the Powers. Thanks to Sir Edward Grey's intervention it was eventually agreed that a conference of Ambassadors should be held in London to discuss the question of Serbia's access to the sea, Albania, the Ægean Islands and Mount Athos, leaving the question of the conditions of peace to stand over till the end of the war.

Down to the meeting of this conference, at the end of 1912, the aim of Russia's policy had been the maintenance of European peace, provided always that her vital interests could be safeguarded by pacific means. On the other hand, it must be admitted that her Government more than once jeopardized the cause of peace by failing to grasp certain salient features of the situation. Neither they nor the Austrians had anticipated the victories on which Serbia had founded her claim to access to the sea, and it was only when they realized that to insist on this claim would mean war with Germany as well as with Austria that they withdrew from an untenable position. Their successive changes of front reflected the views which for the moment found favour with the Emperor. His Majesty was divided between his desire to support the claims of the Balkan States and his wish to keep clear of international complications, and Sazonoff had consequently to vary his language according as either the one or the other of these conflicting purposes held temporary sway over the Emperor's mind. Apt as the Emperor was to be influenced by his immediate surroundings, the presence of the Grand Duke Nicholas and other generals at the Imperial shooting party at Spala at the end of October had tended to give a chauvinistic turn to his policy; while, on returning to Tsarskoe early in December, he once more got into direct touch with Sazonoff and Kokovtsoff, neither of whom desired war. It had been due to their intervention that the partial mobilization desired by the Minister of War had not been carried out, though in consequence of the number of troops which Austria had massed near the Serbian frontier, and of the reinforcements which she had sent to Galicia,

Russia had been obliged to retain 350,000 time-expired men with the colours. But whether it was owing to the advice tendered him by his Ministers or to apprehension of a recrudescence of the revolutionary movement should the Russian arms meet with a serious reverse, the pacific trend of his policy at the end of the year came at a most opportune moment. Public opinion was incensed against Austria, and in many quarters the feeling in favour of war was gaining ground.

Fortunately, too, at this conjuncture, the Emperor of Austria made what was regarded in Russian official circles as a *geste pacifique* by sending Prince Godfried Hohenlohe, formerly military attaché at St. Petersburg and a *persona grata* at the Russian Court, with an autograph letter to the Emperor Nicholas. The object of the Prince's mission was not so much to discuss in detail any of the pending questions as to remove the misunderstandings existing between the two Governments. In this he was to a certain extent successful, and the reply of the Emperor Nicholas to the Emperor of Austria's letter was couched in very friendly terms. It laid stress on the concession which Russia had made in consenting to the creation of an autonomous Albania, and concluded by expressing the hope that, by mutual concessions, an arrangement satisfactory to both Governments might be arrived at. The next step taken by the Austrian Government was to suggest that Russia should dismiss her reservists, on the understanding that the Austrian troops on the Galician frontier should be reduced to a figure somewhat below the normal peace effectives of Russian regiments.

As owing to the political outlook Austria would not reduce the number of her troops on the Serbian frontier, the Russian Government urged that the *communiqué* announcing the dismissal of the Russian reservists should contain an assurance that Austria harboured no aggressive designs against Serbia. After a week of fruitless negotiations the Austrian Ambassador eventually took upon himself to authorize the publication in the *Rossia* of a *communiqué* to the above effect; but, by an unaccountable oversight, he omitted to inform his Government of his having done so. The *Rossia's communiqué* was, in consequence, repudiated by the Vienna Telegraphic Agency. Count Thurn subsequently telegraphed to Vienna explaining how the mistake had arisen; and, as M. Sazonoff did not wish to do anything to injure his career, the incident was passed over in silence by the Russian Press. Count Berchtold thanked M. Sazonoff for the considerate manner in which he had acted, and at the same time published an official *communiqué* disclaiming all responsibility for the various statements made on the subject in the Vienna Press. Count Thurn was, nevertheless, shortly afterwards recalled.

In the meantime Adrianople had fallen, and on April 16 an informal truce was concluded at Chatalja; but so great were the fears entertained by the Russian Government of a Bulgarian advance on Constantinople that it was only after the Bulgarians had definitely renounced all idea of forcing the Chatalja line that they withdrew their proposal for the despatch of an international fleet to the Dardanelles. Negotiations for peace were now resumed, and on May 30 the Treaty of London was signed.

Two other questions in which Russia was directly interested—the delimitation of the future Albanian State and Roumania's claim to a rectification of her frontier on the side of the Dobrudja—had at the same time been passing through a succession of acute phases, which had more than once threatened to involve her in war. In consenting to the creation of an autonomous Albania the Russian Government had counted on its being composed of the territory comprised within a line which, starting from Khimarra on the coast, would skirt the shores of Lake Ochrida and follow the course of the rivers Drin and Boyana to the Adriatic. When, therefore, Austria put forward the unexpected demand that Scutari, which Russia desired to see assigned to Montenegro, should be incorporated in its territory, there ensued a deadlock which was rendered all the more perilous owing to the fact that Austria's attitude had been stiffened by the knowledge that she could count on Germany's support. Though warned not to commit themselves too far with regard to Scutari, as His Majesty's Government could not give them more than diplomatic support on a question which was, after all, but of secondary importance, the Russian Government were so afraid that Austria wanted to make Scutari the capital of an almost independent Albania and to exercise a predominant influence over it through its Catholic tribes, that they declined to give way unless complete satisfaction were given to Serbia in the matter of the five towns of Tarabosch, Luma, Radomir, Djakova and Dibra. In the course of the subsequent negotiations they allowed the first three of the above-named towns to be assigned to Albania, but they made a firm stand as regarded Dibra and Djakova, declaring

that they would never consent to the incorporation in a Moslem State of places where there were Slav religious institutions. Thanks to Sir E. Grey's good offices, Austria was induced to yield on the question of Dibra, but Djakova still barred the way to a complete settlement. The situation was, moreover, rendered all the more acute by the persistence with which the King of Montenegro was pressing the siege of Scutari. King Nicholas had recently incurred Russia's displeasure by a letter in which he had informed the Emperor that, though he had hitherto always obeyed his commands, he would be unable, after the sacrifice of so many Montenegrin lives, to withdraw from Scutari when it was once taken, even should His Majesty order him to do so. Sooner than give it up he would release Russia from all her obligations to Montenegro.

The Emperor, in reply, told the King that he had already released Russia from her obligations by breaking the agreement under which he was bound to undertake no military operations without Russia's permission; that, in the opinion of Russia's friends and allies, Montenegro's claims to Scutari were ill-founded; and that, as Russia would find herself isolated were she to promise him her support, she must decline to give it. In view of the growing gravity of the situation, the Russian Government were now invited to join the other Powers in making energetic representations at Belgrade and Cettinje for the purpose of raising the siege of Scutari and securing the evacuation of the territories assigned to Albania. As they would only agree to do this on the express condition that Djakova was ceded to Serbia, Count Berchtold, on March 21, agreed to abandon his

claim to its incorporation in Albania provided that steps were taken to enforce the immediate cessation of hostilities and the evacuation by Serbia and Montenegro of the territories allotted to that province. Unfortunately, owing to the dilatory action of the Russian Minister, there was some delay in making the necessary notification at Belgrade, and the Austrian Government, in consequence, presented an ultimatum at Cettinje demanding that the civil population should be allowed to leave the town within three days.

Much as this isolated action on the part of Austria was resented at St. Petersburg, the orders given by King Nicholas for a general assault on the town caused such offence that the Russian Government informed the Powers that they would raise no objection to a collective naval demonstration at Antivari, though Russia would not be able to participate in it. The Emperor at the same time addressed a personal telegram to King Nicholas telling him, in terms which amounted to a command, that he must bow to the decision of the Powers. In consequence of the language held by Russia at Belgrade, the Serbian troops received orders on April 10 to abstain from any further active operations against Scutari, but on the 23rd the town surrendered to the Montenegrins. The situation was thus rendered extremely critical, as, unless some coercive measures were taken by the Powers collectively, Austria, it was feared, would have recourse to isolated action, and such action on her part might easily involve Russia in war. In order to prevent this the Russian Government appealed to France and Great Britain to put in an appearance, even if they did not fire a shot, should coercive action of any kind be decided

on. There were, however, difficulties in the way of their doing so. Fortunately, when the outlook was almost desperate—for there was a moment when I thought war inevitable—King Nicholas on May 4 announced his intention of surrendering Scutari to the Powers. Ten days later the town was occupied by an international naval force.

The second question—that of Roumania's claim to territorial compensation—had already been raised at the first Peace Conference in London, but owing to the tactless manner in which it had been treated by the Bulgarian delegate, Dr. Daneff, no settlement had been reached. The Roumanians had now put forward a claim to all the territory comprised within a line drawn from Silistria to Baltchik, and had, in doing so, placed Russia in a very difficult position. By a convention concluded in 1902 she had guaranteed the integrity of Bulgaria's territory, and she had, therefore, to give Roumania a friendly warning not to attempt to occupy any portion of it by force of arms. About the middle of February the unexpected announcement that Roumania contemplated occupying Silistria fell like a bombshell at St. Petersburg, causing a profound feeling of depression in official circles as well as a sharp fall on the Bourse. Much, however, as the Emperor resented what he regarded as an unjustifiable attempt to deprive Bulgaria of territory which Russia had won for her by the War of Liberation, he was so bent on maintaining peace that, while using all his influence to stay Roumania's hand, he caused Bulgaria to be informed that she must be prepared to make some concession. Were she to refuse to do so she might involve not only Russia but Europe in war; and His Majesty therefore gave

her clearly to understand that if she desired his support she must cede Silistria to Roumania.

This question formed the subject of a somewhat heated conversation between the German Ambassador and M. Sazonoff in which Count Pourtales, after pointing out the serious consequences that might ensue from an active intervention by Russia, suggested that, were Bulgaria and Roumania to come to blows, the Powers should stand aside as they had in the Balkan War. The question was, however, one in which Russia was too directly interested for her to take such an engagement. The Black Sea was not the Adriatic, and as M. Sazonoff warned Count Pourtales, circumstances might arise which would compel her to act as her interests dictated. He nevertheless took the opportunity of suggesting that Bulgaria and Roumania should leave the whole question in the hands of the Powers, and it was eventually agreed to refer it to a conference of the Ambassadors at St. Petersburg.

That conference held its first sitting on March 31, under the presidency of M. Sazonoff, and its discussions were throughout conducted on purely party lines—the Ambassadors of the Triple Alliance taking the side of Roumania, while the cause of Bulgaria was pleaded by M. Sazonoff, M. Delcassé and myself. The former based Roumania's claims to Silistria and to the territory comprised within a line drawn from that town to Baltchik, on the ground of its strategical importance for the defence of the Dobrudja. They dwelt more especially on the fact that it was in consequence of the assurances given by the Powers that there should be no change in the territorial *status quo*, that Roumania

had maintained her attitude of reserve during the war, and that now that the Balkan States were to acquire a large accession of territory, Roumania was entitled to some compensation. They also argued that Silistria would certainly have been given to Roumania in 1878 had Bulgaria then acquired the new territories about to be assigned to her.

The representatives of the Triple Entente, on the other hand, contended that the Bulgaro-Roumanian frontier had been definitely fixed by the Treaty of Berlin; that as, owing to her geographical position, Roumania could not participate in the redistribution of Turkey's territory, it was only at Bulgaria's expense that she could receive any territorial compensation, and that no principle of international law entitled a State to demand a cession of territory from one of its neighbours on the ground of the latter's aggrandisement in another direction; that the only principle which Roumania could invoke was the right of the strongest; and that, while fully appreciating the correctness of her attitude, they considered that she could only claim the cession of certain strategical points to render her frontier more secure on the Bulgarian side.

After prolonged and heated discussions the conference decided that Silistria, together with the territory comprised within a radius of three kilomètres, should be assigned to Roumania; that Roumania should indemnify all Bulgarian subjects who within six months expressed their desire to emigrate from the said territory; and that Bulgaria should erect no fortifications along the frontier between the Danube and the Black Sea. The only interest attaching to this award, which was so soon to become a dead letter, was the whole-

hearted support given Bulgaria by M. Sazonoff, as it was in such marked contrast to the attitude which he adopted to her a few months later. It had, however, an unpleasant sequel for myself. Owing to my having held the rank of Ambassador longer than my French colleague, I had been deputed by M. Sazonoff to open the case for Bulgaria, and I did so on the lines indicated above. My language was reported to Bucharest, with the result that when, a few months later, the present Queen of Roumania—then only Crown Princess—whom I had met frequently at Darmstadt, came to St. Petersburg, I was severely taken to task as the supposed inspirer of the Triple Entente's attitude. Her Royal Highness began by remarking that she felt inclined not to speak to me, and then proceeded to ask how I had dared to say that Roumania had no right to any territorial compensation. I replied that I had merely expressed the views which I had formed after a careful study of the question, though those views might have been biased by the fact that Roumania moved in the German orbit. Were Roumania, I added, to enter the fold of the Triple Entente, she would always find in me a warm defender of her interests.

CHAPTER XI

1913–14

DURING the protracted crisis caused by the first Balkan War Russia's rôle had been a very difficult one, and the course of her policy had naturally fluctuated with its successive developments. She had in the spring of 1912 succeeded in reconciling the conflicting claims of Bulgaria and Serbia in Macedonia and in calling into being a Balkan confederation that was to bar Austria's access to the Ægean. She had imagined that this confederation would dance to her tune, whereas it disobeyed her express injunctions and declared war on Turkey. As the natural protector of the Balkan Slavs, she was expected to take charge of their interests and to see that they were not deprived of the fruits of their victory by the intervention of other Powers. In undertaking to champion their cause she was brought face to face with Austria, and in the diplomatic duel which ensued she was seconded by Great Britain and France, and Austria by Germany and Italy. It was mainly due to the untiring efforts of Sir Edward Grey, who acted throughout as mediator and peacemaker, that the two rivals did not have to settle their differences sword in hand and that the European war, which more than once seemed almost within sight, was averted for a time. It was thanks to him that Russia was able to retire without too much loss of prestige from the

position which she had taken up on the questions of a Serbian port and of Scutari; and it was again thanks to his intervention that Austria yielded on the subject of Dibra and Djakova—the two points on which Russia was determined to make a firm stand. Though Russia more than once suffered a rebuff, she could well afford to make concessions on matters of secondary importance, as she could console herself with the thought of all the advantages that would accrue from the final settlement of the Balkan question on the lines laid down by the Treaty of London. Turkey was to be virtually banished from Europe, and her European possessions, with the exception of Albania, were to be divided between Russia's clients; while the Balkan confederation was to be converted into a new international factor with which both Germany and Austria would have to count. The Slav world had, therefore, every reason to rejoice, though, as subsequent events proved, its joy was destined to be short-lived.

As Sir Edward Grey's mouthpiece at St. Petersburg, my rôle throughout the crisis had been to tender counsels of moderation; and both the Emperor and Sazonoff were, fortunately, so bent on maintaining peace so far as was consonant with Russia's honour and interests, that they did not turn a deaf ear to such counsels. The situation was, however, complicated by the fact that Germany had stiffened Austria's attitude by promising to support her should she find herself involved in war with Russia. The Triple Entente was, moreover, at a disadvantage owing to the lack of solidarity between its members. As Sazonoff more than once pointed out in the course of our conversations during the Balkan crisis, as well as during the crisis

which followed the appointment of General Liman von Sanders to the command of the Constantinople army corps—to which reference will be made later on—Germany and Austria were allies, while Great Britain and Russia were only friends. Russia, he asserted, was not afraid of Austria, but she had to reckon with Germany as well. If Germany supported Austria, France would make common cause with Russia; but no one knew what Great Britain would do.

This uncertainty as to our attitude encouraged Germany to exploit the situation. Great Britain was the one Power that could strike a mortal blow at her, and if Germany knew that Great Britain would stand by France and Russia she would think twice before taking any action that would place them in a position from which they could not recede with honour. When, in the following year, Austria presented her ill-fated ultimatum at Belgrade, Sazonoff held much the same language, contending that the situation could only be saved by our declaring our complete solidarity with France and Russia. It was then too late, as nothing that we might have said or done could have averted war; but it is a moot question whether an earlier conversion of the Triple Entente into a formal alliance would have exercised any influence on Germany's attitude. The Emperor took the same view of this question as M. Sazonoff, and held that the fact of our not being Russia's ally prevented us giving her the same effective support as France. While realizing how difficult it would be for His Majesty's Government to take such a step, he could not, he said, understand the apprehensions with which such an alliance was regarded in England. It would be restricted to one of a purely

defensive character, and would not entail on us any greater risk of war than we ran at present. Referring to the question in a private letter addressed to Sir E. Grey in February, 1914, I wrote:

> Impracticable as is, from our point of view, the idea of an alliance at the present moment, there is no doubt a good deal of truth in Sazonoff's contention that, if Germany knew beforehand that France and Russia could count on England's support, she would never face the risks which such a war would entail. The uncertainty which exists with regard to our attitude enables us, no doubt, to influence both sides to maintain peace, but it places the Triple Entente at a disadvantage in its dealings with the Triple Alliance. Should war, unfortunately, ever break out, it will be almost impossible for us to stand aside and not take part in it.

But what really barred the way to an Anglo-Russian alliance was the fact that it would not have been sanctioned by public opinion in England.

In another respect, too, the Triple Alliance was in a better position than the Triple Entente, as its members had, as a general rule, to take their orders from Berlin; whereas, whenever some important step was about to be taken by the latter, so much time was lost in the preliminary exchanges of views that by the time the desired formula had been agreed on the psychological moment had often passed or the situation had so changed that the contemplated action had to be modified. Unity of command is often as necessary in the field of diplomacy as it is in the conduct of military operations; and during the Balkan Wars, as subsequently during the Great War, Entente diplomacy was often handicapped by divided counsels, whereas the policy of the Triple Alliance was dictated by its pre-

dominant partner. The course which that policy was to take—whether for good or evil—was not, moreover, hampered, as was sometimes the case with us, by a divergence of views among the members of the Cabinet. In this connection the following little story is instructive. I had been invited—I think in the summer of 1912—by Mr. and Mrs. Asquith to meet the newly-appointed German Ambassador (Baron Marshal von Bieberstein) and his wife at a luncheon given in their honour at No. 10 Downing Street. After the departure of the other guests our hostess took the Marshals and me to see the room where the Cabinet councils are held. Looking at the long green table, with a score or so of chairs ranged in order around it, the Ambassadress asked, "How many Ministers are there in the Cabinet?" After answering this question, Mrs. Asquith, turning to the Ambassador, said, "And how many are you at Berlin?" "*One*," was the curt reply.

In the spring of 1913 I had the offer of a change of post. The Russian climate, coupled with the strain of so much responsible work, had seriously affected my health, and at the end of April Sir Edward, who was always the most considerate of chiefs, wrote me the following letter:

FOREIGN OFFICE.
April 27, 1913.

MY DEAR BUCHANAN,—Increasing physical infirmity will make it impossible to renew Cartwright's term at Vienna, which comes to an end in November.

I know that your health has not been good at St. Petersburg, and if you really think a change necessary I would submit your name for Vienna.

At the same time, I should like to make it very clear that, unless your health requires it, I do not think it is at all in the public interest that you should leave St. Petersburg. You have done the work there so well that I should regret any change. Whoever your successor might be, it would be some time before he could get the position that I believe you have made for yourself at St. Petersburg.

To put it shortly, I should like you to remain at St. Petersburg; but if St. Petersburg is really injuring your health, I do not think it right or fair that Vienna should be filled up without asking you whether you would like that post for yourself. If you think you can stay at St. Petersburg, I shall not only be satisfied but relieved.—Yours,

(Signed) E. Grey.

The offer was a very tempting one, and as I was on the point of going to England on leave, I asked for time to consider it. The day after my arrival in London I was received in audience by the King, and on His Majesty graciously repeating the offer I virtually accepted it. On the following day, however, I had to confess to Sir Edward that my doctor, whom I had seen in the morning, had told me that I could, in his opinion, face St. Petersburg for another two years without serious injury to my health. Sir Edward therefore proposed that I should remain on there subject to the conditions that if my health broke down before the two years were over I should exchange with Sir Maurice de Bunsen, who would go to Vienna, while if I was able to see the two years out I should succeed Sir E. Goschen on the termination of his appointment as Ambassador at Berlin. I agreed, and I actually remained on at St. Petersburg for another five years. I should, however, never have been able to have done this had it not been for the timely discovery

that the neuritis and other ailments from which I had been suffering were caused by pyorrhœa. Thanks to my friend Sir Kenneth Goadby's skilful treatment of that insidious complaint, I recovered my health, and was able to bear the strain of four strenuous years of war work without once returning home.

On the conclusion of the first Balkan War Sir Edward was also good enough to submit my name for the G.C.M.G.

But to return to more serious matters. The Treaty of London had re-established peace with Turkey, but had not ended the Balkan crisis, which did but pass from one dangerous phase to another. The victors were busy quarrelling over the division of the spoils, and as under the treaty of 1912 both Serbia and Bulgaria had engaged to submit to Russia's arbitration any differences which might arise between them as to the interpretation of its terms, Sazonoff now called on the two Governments to fulfil this engagement. Serbia, he was aware, would not accept an arbitration based solely on the strict interpretation of that treaty, as in such case the award was bound to be given in Bulgaria's favour. He therefore, while recognizing that the latter's claims in Macedonia were based on both ethnographical and historical grounds, endeavoured to induce her to make certain concessions. As no satisfactory reply had been received from either Government, the Emperor (early in June) addressed a strongly worded telegram to the Kings of Serbia and Bulgaria, expressing surprise that no effect had yet been given to his proposal for a conference of the four allied Prime Ministers at St. Petersburg, and warning

them that, were they to embark on a fratricidal war, Russia would reserve her full liberty of action whatever might be the outcome of that conflict.

King Peter's reply was more or less satisfactory, though it insisted that Serbia's claims could not be restricted to the terms of the treaty of 1912; but King Ferdinand merely observed that he had already appealed to Russia's arbitration, and that Serbia was endeavouring to deprive Bulgaria of the fruits of her victories. On June 25 the Bulgarian Minister informed Sazonoff that his Government could not accept arbitration except on the basis of the 1912 treaty, and that they had, moreover, decided to recall their Minister from Belgrade. As this was regarded at St. Petersburg as tantamount to a declaration of war and as a betrayal of the Slav cause, Russia formally denounced the treaty of 1902, under which she had guaranteed the integrity of Bulgaria's territory against an attack on the part of Roumania. A few days later the Bulgarian Government accepted Russia's arbitration without insisting on their former conditions, but at the last moment the departure of their delegates for St. Petersburg was countermanded, and on June 29 General Savoff ordered an advance along the whole line.

In Russian military circles the impression had at first prevailed that the Bulgarians would be strong enough to defeat the combined armies of Greece and Serbia, and though such a result would have had the advantage of precluding any danger of Austria's intervention, the prospect of a too powerful Bulgaria was regarded with a certain apprehension that was, not unnaturally, strengthened by Bulgaria's

utter disregard of Russia's wishes and advice. Both the Emperor and Sazonoff, moreover, had listened sympathetically to Prince Nicholas of Greece, who had come to St. Petersburg for the express purpose of inducing Russia to use her influence at Bucharest in favour of Roumania's intervention in the coming war. The appeal for assistance which Bulgaria now addressed to Russia fell, therefore, on deaf ears, and, so far from exercising a restraining influence on Roumania, Russia indirectly encouraged her to take the field. There was an exchange of friendly messages between the Emperor and King Charles in which the identity of Russia's and Roumania's interests was emphasized.

Though Russia may at the outset have been prompted to adopt this line by the hope of maintaining peace, the idea of checkmating Austria by detaching Roumania from the Triple Alliance and of preventing Bulgaria establishing her hegemony in the Balkans was not altogether absent from her mind. No attempt was even made to restrict Roumania's action to the occupation of the Turtukoï–Baltchik line, and her advance on Sofia deprived Bulgaria of all possibility of retrieving her initial reverses. Under the terms of the Treaty of Bucharest, which was signed on August 10, 1913, she had to submit to seeing Macedonia divided between Serbia and Greece and to ceding to Roumania some eight thousand square kilomètres of territory. The original idea of the Russian Government had been that, while the belligerents should be allowed to draw up their own treaty of peace, that treaty should be subject to revision by the Powers; but all idea of revising the Treaty of Bucharest was dropped after the publication

of the telegram in which the Emperor William congratulated King Charles on the results of his wise and statesmanlike policy.

Meanwhile Turkey, following the example set by Roumania, had moved her troops across the Enos–Midia line and had occupied Adrianople. Russia at once protested, and informed the Porte that she could not allow an emancipated Christian population to be replaced under Ottoman rule. She was not, however, prepared to back up this protest by any military action, more especially as, so far as her material interests were concerned, she had no objection to Adrianople remaining in Turkey's hands. It was different when Turkey went a step farther and ordered her troops to cross the Maritza. Sazonoff was then at once authorized by the Emperor to recall the Russian Ambassador from Constantinople and to concert with his colleagues as to the further measures which Russia should take. This time Russia was really in earnest, and had not the Turkish Government yielded and recalled their troops across the Maritza effect would have been given to the Emperor's orders. As a result of the subsequent negotiations between Turkey and Bulgaria, the former recovered the greater part of Thrace, of which Bulgaria had been in occupation for some six months.

The outbreak of the second Balkan War had created an entirely new situation and had revealed, not for the first time, the little respect with which orders emanating from St. Petersburg were treated at Sofia and Belgrade. Intoxicated with the wine of their victories and suffering from an acute form of megalomania, the Balkan allies were one and all intent on retaining possession of whatever territories their respective armies had wrested

from Turkey. Bulgaria had borne the brunt of the war; she had had to face, on the eastern front, the bulk of the Turkish army, while her losses in killed and wounded far exceeded those of her allies. As a result of her victories she was to annex the large and fertile province of Thrace. Such an extension of her territory towards the east had never been contemplated when, in 1912, she and Serbia had determined their respective spheres of influence in Macedonia. Greece and Serbia, therefore, contended that she ought to renounce her rights under that treaty in favour of her allies. It was their armies that had liberated Macedonia from the Turkish yoke, and Serbia, moreover, would, by the proposed creation of an autonomous Albania, be deprived of certain districts that had been allotted to her.

They failed, however, to take into account the fact that Bulgaria had, ever since the short-lived Treaty of San Stefano, had her eyes constantly fixed on Macedonia as her lawful inheritance, and had during all the intervening years been gradually consolidating her position in that province. Bulgaria, on the other hand, was ill-advised enough to insist on the strict execution of the treaty of 1912, and refused to make concessions which were but reasonable under the altered circumstances, more especially as it was in order to satisfy her territorial ambitions in Thrace that the first Balkan War had been unduly prolonged contrary to the wishes of her allies. She, moreover, regarded the military convention that had been concluded between Greece and Serbia as a direct provocation, framed with the express purpose of forcing her to renounce her long-coveted prize. Finally, she committed the colossal

blunder of placing herself in the wrong and her rivals in the right, in the eyes of the civilized world, by attacking Serbia.

After the manner in which Bulgaria had flouted her advice it was but natural that Russia's sympathies should be on the side of Serbia, but in encouraging Roumania to intervene in the conflict she, in my opinion, steered a course which, as I told Sazonoff at the time, was fraught with danger for the future. If, as I readily admitted, Bulgaria was responsible for the opening of hostilities, Greece and Serbia could hardly be acquitted of what almost amounted to deliberate provocation. Prince Nicholas of Greece had, during his visit to St. Petersburg, urged me to persuade my Government to use all their influence to bring not only Roumania, but even Turkey, into the war which he regarded as imminent. The fact that Greece, who without the victories won by Bulgaria over the Turks would have played but a sorry part in the first Balkan War, was prepared to call in the old enemy of the Balkan Christians to crush her former ally, revealed the general spirit of unscrupulous aggrandizement that produced the second Balkan War. But it was not on such ethical grounds, but on considerations of what the Germans call *Real Politik*, that I tried to dissuade M. Sazonoff from listening to Prince Nicholas. Bulgaria, despite her heavy losses in the first Balkan War, was still a very important factor in the Balkans, while neither Roumania nor Greece could be counted on to fly to Serbia's assistance should she be attacked by Austria. For us to take a step that would alienate Bulgaria for all time and drive her into the arms of the Triple Alliance would, I urged, break down the

barrier which Russia had been at such pains to erect against an Austro-German *Drang nach Osten.*

The Treaty of Bucharest was hailed with satisfaction by the Emperor William, and with good cause. For that treaty undid all that had been accomplished by the first Balkan War and created a situation which Germany turned to good account when the Great War broke out. After its signature King Ferdinand is reported to have said, "*Ma vengeance sera terrible,*" and he kept his word.

I was absent from Russia on sick leave during the greater part of the autumn of 1913, and on returning to St. Petersburg at the end of the year I found the Russian Government greatly exercised by the question of the appointment of General Liman von Sanders to the command of the Turkish army corps at Constantinople, as well as by the engagement of a large number of German officers to hold executive posts in the Turkish army. Such an appointment would, in their opinion, place Constantinople and the key of the Straits in the hands of a German general. We had promised the Russian Government our diplomatic support on this question, but at their request the representations which were to have been made by the Ambassadors of the Triple Entente had been temporarily postponed. It was only, indeed, after the publication of an Imperial *irade* appointing General von Sanders to the command in question that they asked us to take action.

From information which we had received in the meanwhile we had reason to believe that the importance of this command had been exaggerated, and we were, moreover, seriously hampered by the fact—on which the

German Government had laid great stress—that the executive command of the Turkish Fleet was held by a British admiral. We were not, therefore, prepared to go quite as far as M. Sazonoff wished. The instructions originally sent to Sir Louis Mallet had consequently to be toned down. On hearing of this, M. Sazonoff expressed the keenest disappointment. His contention was that, as this was almost the first question seriously affecting her interests on which Russia had appealed to Great Britain for support, it was in the nature of a test case in which the Triple Entente was on its trial. The Entente, he urged, constituted a stronger combination of Powers than the Triple Alliance, and if only Great Britain, France and Russia would let Turkey see that they were in earnest the latter would give way and Germany would do nothing. Instead, however, of acting firmly together, they were always proclaiming their nervous dread of war, and by so doing would one day find that they had brought war upon themselves.

There was a grain of truth in the above contention. During the Balkan Wars Russia had had on more than one occasion to recede from positions which she had somewhat rashly taken up, and the impression that she would never fight had gained such ground at Constantinople that the Turks had even told the German Ambassador that he need have no apprehensions of any action by Russia. M. Sazonoff had, however, been mistaken when he hinted that the Triple Entente had on this occasion proved a failure. For Sir E. Grey had again successfully intervened as mediator, adding one more to the many services which he had already rendered Russia and

Europe in the cause of peace. It was, indeed, as M. Sazonoff himself gratefully acknowledged afterwards, thanks to the firm language which he used to Prince Lichnowsky, that a settlement was eventually reached under which General Liman von Sanders, while being accorded the rank of a Turkish field-marshal and remaining at the head of the German military mission, relinquished the command of the Constantinople army corps.

CHAPTER XII

1910–1914

I HAVE in the preceding chapters dealt exclusively with questions affecting Russia's international position and her relations with foreign Powers; but, before proceeding further and before entering on a review of the fateful year that was to witness the outbreak of a world war, I must devote a few pages to the consideration of her internal situation.

When I arrived in Russia at the end of the year 1910 it was among the students of the universities and of the high schools that the prevailing political unrest was most marked. In many of them strikes had been declared and lectures suspended, while recourse was had to noxious gases and other terroristic measures to prevent students who desired to continue their studies putting in an appearance. On the other hand, vigorous measures were taken by the Government to restore order; but the professors, as a rule, delivered their lectures to almost empty benches under the protection of the police. In a conversation which I had with him early in March M. Stolypin told me that the Government had not suspended the autonomy of the universities, but had left it intact as far as regarded ordinary matters of administration.

They could not, however, accord to a number of hot-headed youths the right, which no other class

of Russian subjects possessed, of holding political meetings without the sanction of the competent authorities. Nor could they permit a return to the state of things that had existed in 1905, when a professor delivered a lecture on the subject of the manufacture of bombs. As neither the peasants nor the army were any longer disposed to listen to revolutionary propaganda, the universities, according to M. Stolypin, were almost the only field left open to the machinations of the committees that, in Paris and other capitals, were endeavouring to organize a fresh rising through the agency of the students. The strike, having accomplished its object —that of calling public attention to the state of Russian educational institutions—was shortly afterwards countermanded. In the Duma, however, the disciplinary measures which the Government had adopted, as well as the expulsion of a number of students and of several leading professors, had but increased the hostility with which their general policy was regarded by a large section of that Chamber. During the debate on the Budget violent speeches were made in condemnation of their habitual recourse to exceptional laws and of their system of administrative exile.

But it was from an unexpected quarter, during the debate in the Council of Empire on a Local Government bill for the six western provinces, that an attack was delivered which placed the Government in a minority. The object of this bill was to limit the influence of the large Polish landowners. In order to accomplish this it was proposed that the election of representatives of the proprietary class to district and

provincial councils should take place in two curiæ, the one Russian and the other Polish, while the number of Polish members to be elected was to be fixed by law. The bill represented, in fact, the idea of nationalism which had of late years been one of the fundamental principles of the Government's policy. It might, therefore, have been expected to appeal to those parties on the right, who were never weary of propounding the doctrine of "Russia for the Russians." They had, however, long been seeking a favourable opportunity for encompassing the fall of M. Stolypin; and a cabal, under the leadership of M. Trepoff and M. Durnovo, succeeded in getting the measure defeated by a majority of 24 votes.

On the following day—March 18—M. Stolypin tendered his resignation, and at one moment it was believed that the Emperor had accepted it. Thanks, however, to the intervention of the Dowager Empress, a Ministerial crisis was averted and M. Stolypin withdrew his resignation. Two days later the *Official Messenger* published an Imperial ukase suspending, by virtue of Article XCIX of the Fundamental Laws, the sittings of the Duma and of the Council of Empire for three days. It was at the same time announced that M. Trepoff and M. Durnovo, the leaders of the attack on M. Stolypin's bill, had been granted leave of absence from their duties from January 1–14. The personal satisfaction thus given M. Stolypin met with but little criticism save on the part of the friends of these two gentlemen; but it was different with regard to the ukase suspending the sittings of the two Chambers.

The object of that ukase had been to enable the Government to promulgate the Western Governments

bill by administrative decree under Article LXXXVII of the Fundamental Laws, according to which the Government was at liberty to publish such decrees in cases of urgency when the Duma was not in session. As had been generally expected, the Western Governments bill was immediately promulgated by an Imperial ukase in the form in which it had left the Duma, and, as had equally been expected, the head of the Octobrist party, M. Guchkoff, at once resigned the presidency of that Chamber. He was succeeded by M. Rodzianko. The Government's organs in the Press defended M. Stolypin's action on the ground that the right to determine whether circumstances were abnormal or not rested solely with the supreme authority, and that that authority could alone decide whether circumstances justified the application of Article LXXXVII of the Fundamental Laws. It cannot, however, be contested that M. Stolypin had not only made an unwarranted and unconstitutional use of that article, but that he had also committed a grave tactical blunder. Had he been contented with the satisfaction afforded him by the suspension of his two principal opponents, and had he had the patience to wait a few months till the bill had become law, as it most certainly would have, in the normal constitutional course of its re-introduction in the Duma, he would have won over the great majority of that assembly to the side of the Government. As it was, he alienated the sympathies of his principal supporters in that chamber at the very moment when he had thrown down the gauntlet to the reactionary party in the Council of Empire. He tried, but utterly failed, to persuade M. Guchkoff and the Octobrists that, in acting as he had done, he was but

defending the rights of the Duma, whose bill had been rejected by the Upper Chamber. Resolutions condemning his action were subsequently passed in both chambers.

The term of two months, within which the Government was obliged by law to submit to the Duma any bill that had been promulgated by Imperial ukase, expired on May 26. On that day, and only on that day, was the Western Government bill laid before that chamber; but in order that there might be no risk of its being rejected, the Duma was at the same time prorogued till the autumn. It would undoubtedly have constituted the one great contentious measure of the autumn session had it not been for the deplorable tragedy that had in the meanwhile removed M. Stolypin from the scene.

On September 9 the Emperor with the Imperial family had left Peterhof for Kieff, where His Majesty was to unveil a statue of Alexander II. On the evening of the 14th the Emperor with the young grand duchesses attended a gala representation at the Opera House. The President of the Council and some of his colleagues who were in attendance occupied seats in the first row of the stalls. During the second *entr'acte* M. Stolypin was standing, with his back to the orchestra, facing the audience, and was talking to a colleague when a young man dressed in evening clothes approached him, coming down the gangway between the stalls from the rear of the house. M. Stolypin seems to have looked at him interrogatively as if to ask him what he wanted, when the young man drew a revolver and fired two shots point blank at His Excellency. A scene of indescribable confusion ensued, during

which the assassin almost succeeded in escaping. The Emperor, who at once advanced to the front of his box, was enthusiastically acclaimed, and the National Anthem was, on the demand of the audience, sung by the whole opera company kneeling on the stage. M. Stolypin was removed in an ambulance to a neighbouring hospital, where he expired four days later.

The assassin, a Christianized Jew, Mordko Bogrov by name, had in 1906-7 been a member of the Revolutionary Committee of Student Delegates, and had, as such, undergone on more than one occasion short terms of imprisonment. Like the famous Azef, he had at the same time acted as an agent of the secret police, whose confidence he secured by the betrayal of some of his associates. Bogrov, it appears, had recently been living with a married brother in St. Petersburg, and only arrived in Kieff on the day preceding his crime. He at once called on Lieutenant-Colonel Kuliabko, the chief of the secret police in that town, and informed him that the St. Petersburg Social Revolutionary Committee had decided to kill the President of the Council and the Minister of Education, and that they were employing as their instruments a woman called Nina Alexandrovna and a man known by the name of Nicholas. Colonel Kuliabko placed implicit confidence in all that Bogrov told him and even entrusted him with the mission of watching over M. Stolypin's safety and of securing the arrest of the intending murderers. He at the same time warned M. Stolypin's secretary of the plot, adding that all the necessary precautions had been taken. The Governor of Kieff, which was known as a hotbed of

the revolutionary movement, in which Jews had always played a prominent part, was said to have issued an order to the effect that no Jews were to be admitted to the theatre. In spite of this, however, Bogrov was given a pass and was not even subjected to a personal examination to see if he carried any weapon on him. Considering that the most minute precautions had been taken to prevent the entrance of any suspicious persons, it seems incredible that Colonel Kuliabko should have taken no steps to have Bogrov watched and that he should have placed implicit reliance on the word of a man who, he knew, had at one time been in close relations with the revolutionary party.

M. Stolypin had been appointed President of the Council in July, 1906, at a moment when Russia was still in the throes of revolution and when government on constitutional lines had been rendered almost impossible by the irreconcilable attitude of the cadets and of the parties of the extreme left. Though it was he who gave effect to the Imperial ukase dissolving the first Duma, it was not on his advice that the Emperor had signed it. In his "Souvenirs de Mon Ministère," published in the *Révue des Deux Mondes*, the late M. Isvolsky tells us how M. Stolypin, who was at that time Minister of the Interior, had been in favour of a Coalition Government in which the Duma and the Council of the Empire were to be largely represented; how the President of the Council, M. Goremykin, who had apparently heard of the *pourparlers* already initiated with certain prominent members of the Duma, had suddenly told his colleagues that it was his intention to submit for the Emperor's signature an Imperial ukase dissolving that assembly; how

he had asked them to meet him the next evening on his return from his audience, and how he had then electrified them by announcing that he had brought back the Imperial ukase duly signed, but that the Emperor had at the same time deigned to relieve him of his functions as President of the Council and to replace him by M. Stolypin.

The step thus taken by the Emperor, in the hope of mitigating the bad impression which the dissolution of the Duma was bound to create, did but exasperate all parties alike. The reactionaries were indignant at M. Goremykin's summary dismissal, while Liberals of all shades of opinion saw in the dissolution of the Duma the first step towards the eventual abrogation of the 1905 charter. In a crisis like that through which Russia was then passing, M. Stolypin had no choice but to accept the mandate with which the Emperor had charged him, involving though it did the dissolution of the Duma. The dissolution was immediately followed by renewed efforts on the part of the cadets and their allies to foment disorders. The Viborg proclamation calling on the people to refuse to serve in the army or to pay taxes was issued; the peasantry were incited to agrarian outrages; the houses of landed proprietors were pillaged or burnt; terrorist crimes followed each other in quick succession; and finally M. Stolypin's summer residence was blown up, his daughter maimed for life, and some fifty persons killed or wounded.

The second Duma, which met in the spring of 1907, was more moderate than the first, but the revolutionary doctrines preached by the Social Democrats forced Stolypin to ask the Chamber to consent to judicial

proceedings being taken against fifty-five members of that party. On an attempt being made to avoid a direct answer to this request by referring it to a Commission, he obtained from the Emperor a ukase dissolving the Duma.

Stolypin then decided that the only course open to him was to restrict the franchise. His object was to secure the representation of the best classes and to give to the landed proprietors and to those who had material interests at stake a preponderating voice in the representative Chamber. A new electoral law was accordingly promulgated under which sweeping changes were effected with a view to introducing as many Conservative or moderate Liberal elements as possible and of eliminating or reducing the representation of all non-Russian nationalities.

This new departure exposed Stolypin to the reproach of having deprived the Duma of its character of a representative assembly; but his accusers were too apt to forget the difficulties with which he was confronted. On the one hand, the party of reaction was clamouring for the abolition of all forms of parliamentary institutions on the ground that they had been tried and found wanting. On the other hand, he could not hope to draw from an ignorant peasantry, hungering for land which did not belong to them, who had not a thought for anything beyond their own personal interests, the material wherewith to build up a Chamber that would help him to stamp out anarchy and to elaborate reforms of a moderate but beneficial character. In his desire to promote the nationalist policy, of which he had made himself the champion, he inclined too much towards the right, and, as has already been

shown, he committed the grave mistake of making an unconstitutional use of Article LXXXVII of the Fundamental Laws.

Stolypin had such confidence in himself—such an iron determination to do what he considered best for his country without any regard for his own safety or interests, that he was too prone to govern with a strong hand. He relied too much on the police and suppressed any manifestation of discontent without attempting to remove the causes which had given rise to it. His faults and mistakes were, however, largely outweighed by the services which he had rendered. Though he failed to destroy the seeds of unrest that continued to germinate underground, he rescued Russia from anarchy and chaos; and, though forced to place her newly granted representative institutions on a narrower foundation, he saved them from the destruction which at one moment threatened them. He was a true patriot and, despite his faults, a great Minister. He combined with rare strength of character a simple, gentle nature that charmed and attracted me. From the moment of my arrival he held out the hand of friendship, which I was not slow to grasp, and up to the day of his death I was in constant touch with him. He was an ideal Minister to transact business with. Frank and outspoken, he always went straight to the point and, what is unusual in a man who, like himself, possessed to an extraordinary degree the gift of oratory, he never wasted time in words. When he once promised a thing it was always done. His death was an irreparable loss not only to his own country but to ours; for, had his life been spared, and had he been at the head of the Government when war broke out,

many of the disasters which have since befallen Russia would have been avoided.

He had achieved one signal success by initiating a scheme of agrarian reform which had conferred inestimable benefits on the peasantry. With the abolition of serfage by Alexander II, the Russian peasantry had not only secured their own personal liberty, but had at the same time been endowed with grants of land. The Government, however, in its desire to prevent the formation of an agrarian proletariat, had not allotted these lands to the peasants individually, but had divided them among the different communes to be held under a system of collective communal ownership. Each commune, or *mir*, then apportioned out the lands assigned to it in separate lots among its members for a fixed term of years, at the end of which these lots were redistributed afresh. Such a system was incompatible with the requirements of modern agriculture, as it deprived the peasants of all incentive to develop the land of which they were but temporary tenants. In order to give the peasants a personal interest in their lands, and with a view to creating a conservative class of peasant proprietors, Stolypin introduced a series of agrarian reforms which had for their object the gradual conversion of the communal lands into individual holdings. He further facilitated the purchase by the peasants of lands belonging to the State and to the Imperial *apanages* by the institution of peasant banks. The success of Stolypin's agrarian policy surpassed all expectations, and at the time of his death nearly 19,000,000 acres of land had been allotted to individual peasant proprietors by the land committees.

M. Kokovtsoff, who succeeded Stolypin as President of the Council, was a man of a very different stamp, representing as he did the best type of the old Russian bureaucracy. Honest, hardworking and remarkably intelligent, he had, as Minister of Finance, effected an extraordinary improvement in Russia's financial position; and it was in great measure thanks to his able administration, as well as to the progressive development of Russia's industries and agriculture, that in 1914 her ordinary revenue, which during the preceding years had been rapidly expanding, was estimated at over £370,000,000, and that the gold reserve amounted to £150,000,000. The only serious blot in the Russian Budget was the fact that £95,000,000 of the ordinary revenue were derived from the Government's alcohol monopoly. M. Kokovtsoff was on better terms with the Duma than either his predecessor or the majority of his colleagues. He had on more than one occasion evinced a desire to work in harmony with it; but in an official statement, published shortly after his appointment as President of the Council, he made it quite clear that, while there could be no question of the abrogation of any of the existing institutions of Government, Stolypin's policy must be carried out in its entirety and would not be changed owing to the acts of terrorists.

In foreign policy M. Kokovtsoff was a firm supporter of the Anglo-Russian understanding. I had a great personal regard for him, and our official relations were always of the best. Unfortunately, while possessing, like M. Stolypin, great natural eloquence, he had not the latter's gift of being able to compress what he had to say into a few words, and, after my conversations

with him, I had often to ask myself: "*Was ist der langen Rede kürzer Sinn?*" ("What, briefly, is the long oration's gist?"). He had not, moreover, Stolypin's commanding personality, and, as he was not always able to impose his own views on his colleagues, his assurances did not carry the same weight.

Stolypin's assassination had naturally drawn public attention to the extraordinary and anomalous methods of the Okhrana, or secret police—that darkest of all dark blots in the history of the old régime. Though it seems almost incredible, it is a fact that the Government was in the habit of employing creatures like Azeff, who, acting as their *agents provocateurs*, incited to crime and murder and then delivered over into the hands of the police their unsuspecting victims. They kept these men in their employ even when they knew them to be active revolutionaries who had themselves played a prominent part in the assassination of high-placed State officials. During the autumn session of the Duma the drastic reform of the Okhrana was urgently but vainly demanded.

During the year 1912 there was, with the exception of a number of strikes of a distinctly political character, no open manifestation of the prevailing discontent on the part of the proletariat, while the peasants were engrossed by the task of securing for themselves the benefits accruing from Stolypin's agrarian reforms. The revolutionary organizations were, nevertheless, quietly but actively carrying on their subterranean work, with the result that mutinies broke out in the Baltic and Black Sea fleets as well as among the troops at Tashkent, which had to be suppressed by force. In September the third Duma was dissolved after a life

of four and a half years. The new elections, however, effected but little change in the composition of that chamber.

The Octobrists, though somewhat diminished in numbers, still held the balance between the parties on their right and on their left; but they were so dissatisfied with the continual postponement of all constitutional reforms that they were gradually adopting an attitude of greater independence towards the Government. The increasing gravity of the internal situation was, indeed, one of the causes that contributed to the determination of the Government not to depart from a pacific attitude during the acute stages of the Balkan crisis.

In June of the following year—1913—the Duma by a large majority passed a resolution censuring the Government for prolonging the state of exceptional law and for delaying the introduction of measures of constitutional reform. The continual postponement of these reforms, together with the severity of the administrative régime that had been accentuated by M. Maklakoff, the newly appointed Minister of the Interior, had so incensed all the law-abiding classes that, as M. Guchkoff remarked, there had never been a time when Russian society and the Russian people had been so deeply permeated with the revolutionary spirit. The legislative work of the Duma continued to be hampered by the constant rejection or radical amendment of its bills by the Council of the Empire and by the failure of the Government to submit for its consideration measures of importance.

To quote but one instance of these. A bill for the reform of the municipalities in Poland that had

been voted by the Duma was amended by the Council of the Empire so as to prohibit the use of the Polish language in the debates of the municipal councils. Though the President of the Council had himself supported the proposal to allow the use of Polish, he was successfully opposed by the reactionary Ministers of Justice and of the Interior and by the Procurator of the Holy Synod. The reactionary party in the Government was rapidly gaining the upper hand, and during all the ensuing months till the outbreak of war the situation grew steadily worse. M. Kokovtsoff was summarily dismissed and M. Goremykin, who had been responsible for the dissolution of the first Duma, was once more appointed President of the Council. An amiable old gentleman with pleasant manners, of an indolent temperament and quite past his work, he had not moved with the times, and still looked upon the Duma as an unimportant factor that could be safely ignored. With the consummate skill of the born courtier he had ingratiated himself with the Empress, though, except for his ultra monarchical views, he had nothing whatever to recommend him. The record of his tenure of office in 1906, on the other hand, extinguished all hope of constitutional reforms so long as he enjoyed the confidence of the Emperor. Discontent became so general and so acute, strikes succeeded each other in such rapid succession and assumed such dangerous proportions, that it was hardly surprising that the German Ambassador should have predicted that the declaration of war would start the revolution.

CHAPTER XIII

1896–1914

I HAVE in previous chapters reported some of my conversations with the Emperor Nicholas, and it is time that I should give a brief account of my personal relations with His Majesty and with the Imperial family in general. Though I am only dealing at present with the pre-war period, I shall occasionally have to anticipate and to refer to events of a later date.

My relations with the Imperial family date back to the days, some sixteen years before my appointment as Ambassador at St. Petersburg, when I was accredited as *chargé d'affaires* to the Empress's brother, the Grand Duke of Hesse. Princess "Alix"—the name by which the Empress was best known before her marriage—was then a beautiful girl, though shy and reserved; but when once this barrier of reserve was broken down, one realized how charming she could be. Her natural kindness of heart manifested itself in many ways, and in our case more especially by the ready sympathy which she more than once showed us when we were in trouble. Her face was a very striking one, with, at times, a sad and pathetic expression—an expression which Koppay has reproduced to the life in the portrait which he painted soon after her marriage. I remember remarking, when I first saw an engraving of this

THE EMPRESS, WITH THE TSAREVITCH

(From a photograph in the possession of Sir Ian Malcolm)

picture, that there was something in it that suggested the idea of impending tragedy.

It was during a visit which Their Majesties paid to Darmstadt in 1896 that I first had the honour of being presented to the Emperor. It was in one of the *entr'actes* of a gala performance given at the Court theatre, and under ordinary circumstances such a presentation would not have alarmed me. But I had been charged by Lord Salisbury with a somewhat delicate mission, and I was afraid that I should not get in what I wanted to say in the course of a few minutes' conversation. Lord Salisbury had, during the Emperor's recent visit to Balmoral, spoken to him about the Armenian question, which was then passing through one of its acute phases, and the Emperor Nicholas, who was about to visit Paris, had promised to communicate to him, through our Ambassador, the result of the conversations which he was to have on the subject with members of the French Government.

As the Emperor in his conversation with Lord Dufferin had said nothing about Armenia, I had been instructed to endeavour to ascertain whether any decision had been arrived at in Paris. I had hoped, by an indirect reference to the Balmoral meeting, to remind the Emperor of his promise without having to violate the rules of Court etiquette by myself introducing the subject; but this hope was doomed to disappointment. The Emperor, after saying how much he had enjoyed his visit to the Queen, of whom he spoke in the warmest terms, proceeded to speak of matters of local interest, and disconcerted me by saying that he had heard that I had a charming daughter. I confess that for the moment I wished

my daughter anywhere, as the mention of her name had deprived me of my last chance of giving the conversation the turn which I desired. I had, therefore, no choice but to tell the Emperor straight out, as he was on the point of dismissing me, that Lord Salisbury would be glad to know what, if any, decisions had been taken at Paris. Much to my relief, he at once reassured me by requesting me to inform Lord Salisbury that during his short stay at Paris his time had been so taken up with other matters that he had had no opportunity of discussing the Armenian question with the French Ministers.

In the autumn of the following year the Emperor and Empress spent several weeks with the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess at Wolfsgarten, and we were occasionally invited to meet them there or at the Darmstadt tennis club, where the Emperor sometimes played while the Empress sat and looked on. The Emperor also received me in private audience, when he talked to me on a variety of subjects. He began with tennis and then went on to shooting, telling me all about the elk, stag, buffaloes and wild boar which he had recently shot in Poland, and saying that his best day's pheasant shooting was 1,400 head, which he considered quite enough. As the conversation became more political in character I remarked that, according to the German Press, His Majesty's Government were pursuing a long-sighted Machiavellian policy with the intent of provoking a European war; whereas, if the truth were known, they had no definite policy at all and were not in the habit of looking far ahead. The Emperor laughed and said that one of the disadvantages of parliamentary government was that the policy of the

Government of the day might be reversed by the Government of the morrow. There could thus be no continuity in its foreign policy. Foreign Governments could not, therefore, place implicit reliance on our friendship, though in view of our insular position it was no doubt to our interest to preserve our liberty of action and to keep aloof from all hard-and-fast alliances.

With regard to what I had said about the German Press, His Majesty observed that nothing interested him more than to read what people thought of him and his Government. He then asked me how things were going on the Indian frontier, and on my saying that order was gradually being restored there, he proceeded to speak of our relations in Asia. He did not, he said, believe in buffer States, unless they were strong and independent; and Persia, with its effete and corrupt Government, was too weak to play the rôle of such a State with advantage. Russia had already quite as much territory as she could manage, and he did not desire to acquire more; but he personally thought that our relations would be far more friendly and satisfactory were there no Persia between us. He feared, however, that British public opinion was hardly yet prepared to see England and Russia neighbours, though our old distrust of his country was, he rejoiced to say, gradually waning. During the rest of the audience the Emperor talked about the Klondike and Siberian mines, about his own journey through Siberia and about its climate and vegetation.

I little foresaw when I took leave of His Majesty how many audiences I was to have with him in years to come, and how eventually I should have to hold language such as no Ambassador before me has, I

imagine, ever held to an autocratic Sovereign. The fact, however, that my wife and I were personally known to the Emperor and Empress was a considerable asset in our favour when we went to St. Petersburg.

I had, as already stated in Chapter VIII, assumed charge of the Embassy at a moment when the Anglo-Russian understanding had been somewhat strained in consequence of the Potsdam Agreement, and I made it a rule from the first to be perfectly frank and outspoken in my conversations with the Emperor. His Majesty, who was most anxious to maintain that understanding intact, appreciated this frankness and honoured me with his confidence. During the years which followed my relations with him gradually assumed a more intimate character, and I personally became devotedly attached to him. His Majesty had such a wonderful charm of manner that when he received me in audience he almost made me feel that it was a friend, and not the Emperor, with whom I was talking. There was, if I may say so without presumption, what amounted to a feeling of mutual sympathy between us. Knowing, as he did, that my language with regard to international questions was inspired by my desire to promote Anglo-Russian friendship, while that as regarded the internal situation I had what I conceived to be his true interests at heart, he never once resented my outspoken language.

At official ceremonies, with the exception of the New Year's diplomatic reception, the Emperor seldom spoke to any of the Ambassadors. He would shake hands with them without engaging them in conversation, and would then go from one group of Russians to another, talking with whom he would. On one occasion —it was at a dinner given at Peterhof in 1911 in honour

of the King of Serbia—he placed me in rather an embarrassing position. I was the only Ambassador present, having been invited to meet Prince Arthur of Connaught, who happened to be on a visit to the Emperor and Empress. His Royal Highness, however, had at the last moment been told by the Emperor that the dinner would not amuse him, and that he had better go out stalking. There was thus no *raison d'être* for my presence at the dinner, and I remember poor Stolypin—who was assassinated a few weeks later—asking me what I was doing "*en cette galère.*" After dinner one of the Court chamberlains came up to me and begged me to stand on one side of the room where the Emperor was about to pass, as His Majesty would doubtless wish to speak to me. I accordingly did so; but as His Majesty passed without apparently seeing me, my friend once more placed me in another favourable position for catching His Majesty's eye—with the same unfortunate result. As he was about to repeat the experiment a third time I remarked that if His Majesty wished to speak to me he could always send for me, but that I was not going to run after him. It was only as he was about to retire that the Emperor, as he passed, shook hands with me and bade me good night. The fact was that he had forgotten, when he sent Prince Arthur out shooting, that I had been invited to the dinner, and consequently felt somewhat embarrassed by my presence.

Only once had I the courage to approach the Emperor at a public ceremony and to speak to him without being sent for. It was during the war, at the launching of a battle cruiser. His Majesty was standing alone, watching the preliminary proceedings, and

as I had something which I particularly wished to say to him I went up and spoke to him. He received me very graciously and kept me in conversation till the ceremony was about to commence.

It is a curious fact that, in spite of the long-established ceremonial and the traditional etiquette of the Imperial Court, Ambassadors were sometimes treated rather cavalierly. So much was this the case that at a meeting of Ambassadors convoked shortly after my arrival the doyen was charged to make certain representations on the subject. According to the unwritten law governing such questions, an Ambassador who is invited to lunch or to dine at the palace lunches or dines at the Sovereign's table. When, therefore, on the eve of my first audience I received a telephone message from Tsarskoe saying that I was to remain to luncheon, I naturally imagined that I was to lunch with the Imperial family. I was, however, mistaken, as at the conclusion of my audience I was taken off to lunch with the household. I said nothing at the time, as I felt that it hardly became a new-fledged Ambassador to be too punctilious.

In the following year, on being invited to Tsarskoe to present to Their Majesties the members of the recently arrived British delegation, I was once more constrained to lunch with the household in spite of my having tried to excuse myself. As my colleagues and I had agreed not to accept such invitations in future, I thought it time to protest. As soon, therefore, as the luncheon was over I spoke to the grand master of the ceremonies. He had, I said, placed me in a very embarrassing position. I had come to the palace in my official capacity as His Majesty's Ambassador, and he

must know as well as I did that under such circumstances it was contrary to all etiquette to invite me to lunch with the household. I therefore trusted that he would not repeat such invitations in future, and that he would arrange for me to return to St. Petersburg as soon as my audiences were over. Count Hendrikoff had to admit that I was right, and on all subsequent occasions I was given a special train, which waited for me at the Tsarskoe station till I was ready to return to town.

Ever since the revolutionary outbreak that had followed the Japanese War the Emperor and Empress had lived in comparative retirement at Tsarskoe Selo, and only came to St. Petersburg when some State function or religious ceremony necessitated their presence there. The Court no longer played a part in the social life of the capital, and the splendid balls, of which the Winter Palace had so often been the scene, were a tradition of the past. From time to time, on such occasions as that of the Romanoff Tercentenary, there were gala performances at the opera, when the house presented a wonderful sight with the parterre one mass of gorgeous uniforms and the boxes filled with smartly dressed ladies resplendent with jewels.

But only once during the whole period of my mission were the doors of the Winter Palace opened for anything beyond the formal New Year's reception and the ceremony of the Blessing of the Waters at the Epiphany. It was during the winter of 1913–14 that the heads of missions and the leading members of Russian society were invited to witness a performance of *Parsifal* in the private theatre in the Hermitage that had been built by the Empress Catherine. It was in

every respect a beautiful performance, and one of which the great Catherine might herself have been proud. I, personally, am not musical, and I was afterwards reproached by the Empress Marie and the young Grand Duchesses with having slept peacefully through the performance; but, as I assured them, I had but closed my eyes the better to listen to the music. The dinner, however, that was served in the Winter Palace during one of the *entr'actes* hardly came up to one's expectations after all that one heard of the splendours of such entertainments in the past. Neither from a spectacular nor from a gastronomic standpoint could it compare with a State banquet at Buckingham Palace.

In their retreat at Tsarskoe the Emperor and Empress led a simple domestic life, and the latter discouraged the idea of allowing outsiders to intrude into their happy family circle. They entertained but little, and it was only on very rare occasions—such as the arrival of General Sir Arthur Paget on a special mission; the visit of Admiral Sir David Beatty (as he then was) with the First Battle-cruiser Squadron; the meeting of the Allied Conference at Petrograd on the eve of the revolution—that I had the honour of lunching or dining with the Imperial Family. Once—in 1916—I was invited to witness a private representation at Tsarskoe of the films showing the part which the British army and navy had played in the war; but though I sat between the Emperor and Empress during the representation, which lasted till past eight o'clock, I was not invited to remain to dinner. Nor was the French Ambassador, who was invited a few days later to witness a representation of French war films. As Ambassador, therefore, I had but few opportunities

THE EMPRESS MARIE

(From a photograph kindly given me by Her Imperial Majesty)

of any serious conversation with the Emperor unless I could find some excuse for asking for a special audience.

With the Empress Marie it was very different. Her Majesty liked to see people, and, though since the death of the Emperor Alexander III she had not entertained on a large scale, she gave small, informal luncheons to which I often had the privilege of being invited. Her whole personality was so attractive and sympathetic that she was loved by all who approached her, and she had the great gift of putting everybody at their ease. Her sense of humour also did away with all constraint on the part of the guests, so that the conversation at these luncheons never flagged and was as a rule very amusing. I had, more than once, occasion to discuss with Her Majesty the internal situation, which, as the war progressed, caused her ever-increasing preoccupation. Realizing as she did the danger of the course which the Emperor was steering, she repeatedly tendered counsels of moderation, and, had her advice been followed, Russia might have been spared much suffering. But Fate had willed it otherwise.

Among the other members of the Imperial family the Grand Duchess Marie Pawlowna, the widow of the Grand Duke Wladimir, took the first place. In her palaces at St. Petersburg and Tsarskoe Her Imperial Highness held a little Court of her own. It had, indeed, socially speaking, become a substitute in miniature for what the Imperial Court had been before it underwent all but total eclipse owing to the retired life led by the Emperor and Empress. A *grande dame* in the best sense of that term, but without any pretensions as regards the strict observance of Court

etiquette, the Grand Duchess was admirably fitted to play the part of hostess and to do the honours of the Court. With great conversational gifts, she was not only herself full of *verve* and *entrain*, but possessed the art of inspiring them in others. Her entertainments, no matter what form they took, were never dull, and no one was ever bored. At her dinners and receptions one met many of the younger members of the Imperial family and the *élite* of Russian society, more especially the "smart set," as well as a sprinkling of the official and artistic worlds. For the Grand Duchess, though very fond of society, had other and more serious tastes, and was President—and a very active one—of the Russian Academy of Arts. During the war she devoted herself entirely to Red Cross work, while she was exceptionally well-informed on all political and military questions, in which she took active interest.

The Grand Duchess Victoria—the wife of the Grand Duke Cyril—who, when she was Grand Duchess of Hesse, had befriended us at Darmstadt, and the Grand Duchess Xenia, the Emperor's sister, whose kindness to us I shall never forget, also entertained a good deal; and many were the pleasant evenings which we spent at their informal dinners and dances. One of the most attractive traits in the Russian character was—for I cannot speak of the present—its extreme simplicity; and all the members of the Imperial family were as simple and natural as could be. They never stood on their dignity and disliked being treated with too much ceremony. When they came to the Embassy it was always by preference to some informal entertainment, and what they liked the best of all was a *dîner dansant* at round tables, where they could talk unreservedly to

their friends. No one could have been more simple and natural than the Emperor himself. I remember how, at the diplomatic reception on New Year's Day, 1912, after speaking to me about some political question, he said: "My sisters tell me that they are going to your house to-night. Are you giving a ball?" On my replying that it was not a regular ball, but that we were giving a dinner of about a hundred and fifty persons at round tables and were going to dance afterwards, His Majesty exclaimed: "What fun that will be." I longed to ask him to come too, but knew that it would be useless, as neither he nor the Empress ever went into society.

Of the Grand Dukes whom I met in society or at the Yacht Club, where I occasionally dined, the Grand Duke Nicholas Michaelowich was the one whom I knew the best. A liberal-minded and cultured man, he was distinguished alike as an author—he had written an admirable history of the reign of Alexander I—and as a collector of pictures and miniatures, of which he was an expert judge. He honoured me with his friendship, and I shall have later on the opportunity of paying a tribute of my affectionate regard to his memory. He always drove about in an ordinary "isvostchik" (cab), and his advanced political views, as well as his democratic ways, had earned him the sobriquet of "Philippe Egalité."

CHAPTER XIV

1914

IN his book on the war the late Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg asserts that by joining the Entente Great Britain encouraged France and Russia in their warlike designs. Such a contention is absolutely unfounded. In the first place Russia, with whom I am alone concerned, did not desire war, and throughout the protracted Balkan crisis of 1912-13 the preservation of peace had been the keynote of her policy. In spite of occasional errors of judgment on the part of his Government, the Emperor, when faced with a situation involving the question of war or peace, never hesitated to throw the whole weight of his influence on the side of peace. So far did he carry his pacific policy, so ready was he to make concessions, if only by so doing he could avert the horrors of war, that at the end of 1913, as I have shown in Chapter XI, the impression had gained ground that Russia would never fight, an impression that unfortunately encouraged Germany to exploit the situation. In the second place, the idea that His Majesty's Government ever incited Russia to embark on a policy of adventure is refuted by facts. The exact contrary was the case. No one ever worked harder than did Sir Edward Grey to preserve the peace of Europe during those two critical years; and it was thanks mainly to his untiring efforts, to his restraining

influence and to the counsels of moderation, which he gave both at St. Petersburg and Vienna, that war was averted. If anyone was to blame it was Germany herself; for it was her policy of piling up armaments wherewith to impose her will on Europe that forced Great Britain, France and Russia to concert together for the protection of their respective interests. Nor is it true that the aim of the Entente Powers was to encircle Germany with an iron ring. In concluding an agreement that was to remove as far as possible any cause of further misunderstanding between them, Russia and Great Britain had not been inspired by any feeling of hostility to Germany. They, on the contrary, gave repeated proof of their desire to cultivate friendly relations with her—Russia, by concluding the Potsdam Agreement, and Great Britain, by entering into negotiations with her—with the object of placing Anglo-German relations on a better footing. I would supplement what I have already said on this subject by recording the conversations which I had with the Emperor on the international situation between the years 1912 and 1914.

On February 23, 1912, I had an audience in which, after informing the Emperor that the main object of Lord Haldane's recent visit to Germany was to create a better feeling between London and Berlin, I received the emphatic assurance of the satisfaction which the news of this visit had caused His Majesty. Russia, he said, had concluded an arrangement with Germany that had greatly improved her relations with that empire; and it was not only natural, but necessary, in the interest of the world's peace, that relations of a similar friendly character should be established between

Germany and Great Britain. A nation might be attracted to one nation more than to another, but this was no reason why it should not live on good terms with the latter. His Majesty then proceeded to say that he had no reason to mistrust Germany except with regard to her Turkish policy. If the Ottoman army were ever to take the field it would be either against Russia or against one of the Balkan States; it was not, therefore, a friendly act on Germany's part to supply it with military instructors. It was thanks to those instructors that that army was acquiring a high degree of efficiency; but though he had more than once questioned the Emperor William on the subject, he had never received a satisfactory answer.

In another audience—April 14, 1913—during the discussions which were taking place on the subject of Scutari, the Emperor said that he fully realized that Germany would make common cause with Austria, and that he had no intention of embarking on a war with those two empires about a wretched Albanian town. In supporting the claims of the Balkan States with an insistence which, he feared, had sometimes caused His Majesty's Government considerable embarrassment, Russia had but fulfilled her historic mission as the protector of those States. The crisis had, he was glad to say, brought the two Governments nearer together, and he was more especially grateful for the services which Sir Edward Grey had rendered the cause of peace. On my observing that, while desirous of giving Russia all the support in their power, His Majesty's Government were at the same time anxious to maintain good and friendly relations with Germany, His Majesty said that he quite understood this and that he

desired to do the same. He was leaving shortly for Berlin to attend the Royal wedding, and was looking forward with the greatest pleasure to meeting the King there. During this visit he would, no doubt, as on former occasions, be plied with questions and proposals by the Emperor William. He would in that case listen patiently to what the Emperor had to say and be careful not to commit himself, as he always found that this was the safest course to pursue.

Returning once more to the subject of the Balkan War, the Emperor told me that as regarded the contemplated occupation of Constantinople by the Bulgarians, the latter had originally intended to offer it to Russia as a token of gratitude for their liberation from the Turkish yoke. He had given them clearly to understand that Russia could not possibly accept such a gift, and he had urged them to renounce all idea of attempting to occupy it.

As the conversation then turned on the German Army Bill and the counter-measures being taken by France to meet the new military situation, I asked the Emperor whether he thought that the financial strain thus imposed on the two countries would be so severe that one or other of them might lose patience and precipitate a war, and whether, if this danger really existed, it would be possible for the Powers to do anything to avert it. The Emperor replied that in 1899 he had taken the initiative in convoking the Peace Conference at The Hague, but his action had been misrepresented as aiming at a general disarmament. He was not, therefore, tempted to repeat the experiment, and would abstain from putting forward any proposals on the present occasion. He quite understood the

reasons which had prompted the proposed increase of the German army, but the German Government must be aware that they were but setting an example which other States would be bound to follow. They would probably have no difficulty in finding the men, but whether the country would for long be able to bear the increased taxation was another question. Russia, on the other hand, had unlimited resources to draw on with regard both to men and money; and just as His Majesty's Government had fixed the relative strength of the British and German fleets at sixteen to ten, so he was determined to maintain the same ratio between the Russian and German armies. It was impossible to foresee what would happen, but it was very necessary to prepare beforehand to meet the danger should it arise.

The Emperor spoke of Austria without any bitterness, but as a source of weakness to Germany and as a danger to peace, owing to the fact that Germany was bound to support her in her Balkan policy. He further expressed the opinion that the disintegration of the Austrian Empire was merely a question of time, and that the day was not far distant when we should see a kingdom of Hungary and a kingdom of Bohemia. The Southern Slavs would probably be absorbed by Serbia, the Roumanians of Transylvania by Roumania, and the German provinces of Austria incorporated in Germany. The fact that Germany would then have no Austria to inveigle her into a war about the Balkans would, His Majesty opined, make for peace. I ventured to observe that such a recasting of the map of Europe could hardly be effected without a general war.

In March, 1914, public attention was drawn to

Russia's international position by the publication in the *Novoye Vremja* of a series of conversations with a Russian statesman in whom it was easy to recognize Count Witte. The gist of these conversations was to the effect that the only hope of permanent peace lay in a regrouping of the Powers. Count Witte had always regarded a close understanding with Germany as the mainspring of Russia's foreign policy, and had consequently denounced the Anglo-Russian agreement as a mistaken sacrifice of her freedom of action. Very similar views were held by the German party at Court, who contrasted the material advantages to be derived from an alliance with Germany with the somewhat problematic benefits which an understanding with Great Britain had to offer. Even persons who were well disposed towards us were beginning to ask themselves of what practical value was an understanding with a country whose support could not be counted on in the event of war.

I was not, therefore, surprised when, in an audience which I had on April 3, the Emperor himself broached the subject of Anglo-Russian relations. We had been talking of the views expressed by Count Witte in the *Novoye Vremja*, and His Majesty had ridiculed the idea of a regrouping of the Powers. Much as he desired to live on good terms with Germany, an alliance with her was, he declared, out of the question, as, apart from other reasons, Germany was endeavouring to acquire a position at Constantinople that would enable her to keep Russia shut in altogether in the Black Sea. After remarking that with Europe divided into two camps the international situation was disquieting, the Emperor said : " What I should like to see is a closer

bond of union between England and Russia, such as an alliance of a purely defensive character." On my remarking that this was, I feared, impracticable at present, the Emperor then suggested that we might at any rate conclude some arrangement similar to that which existed between France and England. Though he was not acquainted with the terms of that arrangement, he believed that if we had not actually a military convention with France we had discussed and agreed on what each country was to do in certain eventualities. I said that I knew nothing about our arrangement with France, but that it would, for material reasons, be impossible for us to send troops to co-operate with the Russian army. "I have men enough and to spare," replied the Emperor, "and such an expeditionary force would serve no useful purpose; but it might be advantageous to arrange beforehand for the co-operation of the British and Russian fleets. "Our understanding," His Majesty continued, "is at present confined to Persia, and I am strongly of opinion that it ought to be extended, either by some sort of arrangement such as I have just suggested, or by some written formula which would record the fact of Anglo-Russian co-operation in Europe."

I told the Emperor in reply that much as I should personally welcome any arrangement that would tend to consolidate the Anglo-Russian understanding, I could but ask myself whether, supposing that England had in 1913 been the ally of Russia, she could have rendered her any more effective service than she had done as her friend. On several occasions during the prolonged Balkan crisis she had been able to play the rôle of mediator at Berlin and Vienna. It was thanks,

moreover, to her friendly intervention that a more or less satisfactory settlement of the Serbian port question had been arrived at, and that Austria had yielded about Dibra and Djakova, which were blocking the way to a settlement of the all-important question of Scutari. It was, I thought, doubtful whether we should have been so successful either at Berlin or Vienna had we approached those two Governments as the ally of Russia instead of as a friend who might be turned into an ally should Germany and Austria force war on Russia. While admitting that there might be some force in the above argument, the Emperor said that he would nevertheless prefer to see the Anglo-Russian understanding assume a more precise and definite character.

I recently came across the following passage in Admiral Tirpitz's "Memoirs" (English edition, Vol. 1, p. 256): "During the visit of the English Fleet to Kiel at the end of June, 1914, the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, Buchanan, announced the conclusion of an Anglo-Russian naval convention." It would appear from the context that I had intended this announcement to act as a sort of counterblast to the friendly gesture implied in the despatch by His Majesty's Government of a British squadron to Kiel. If Admiral Tirpitz has ever read Sheridan's play *The Critic*, he will remember how the Governor of Tilbury Fort interrupted his daughter, who was descanting on all that she saw on the approaching Armada, by remarking:

> The Spanish fleet thou canst not see—because
> It is not yet in sight.

In the same way I may reply that I did not announce the conclusion of an Anglo-Russian convention —because no such convention ever existed. I may further inform the gallant admiral that I never even entered into negotiations with the Russian Government for the conclusion of a naval convention, and that, if Great Britain eventually became Russia's ally both by land and sea, that alliance owed its being to Germany's violation of Belgium's neutrality.

I have recorded the above conversations in order to show how utterly unfounded are the charges of chauvinism brought by so many highly placed Germans against both Russia and Great Britain. Not one word did the Emperor ever utter that betrayed a desire on his part to adopt an aggressive attitude towards Germany. On the contrary, he never missed an occasion of expressing his earnest wish to live on good terms with her. It was only when he realized the trend of her policy and the meaning of her ever-growing armaments that he took steps to guard against possible future eventualities. He increased the number of his peace effectives, and he suggested the conversion of the Anglo-Russian understanding into an alliance of a purely defensive character. On the other hand, the language which I used when the Emperor made this tentative suggestion is, I think, a sufficient answer to those who accuse His Majesty's Government of having encouraged Russia to steer a warlike course. Germany, it must not be forgotten, had in 1913 raised £50,000,000 by a levy on capital for military purposes, and Russia had to take counter-measures in self-defence. I remember how M. Delcassé, who was then Ambassador at St. Petersburg, warned me at the time

that Germany would never have had recourse to such a drastic measure of finance were she not determined on war in the near future. I passed on the warning to London, but it fell on deaf ears, for no one believed Germany capable of such criminal folly. The general impression seems to have been that, as a friend wrote to me, the "financiers," who were opposed to war, would put the brake on. The German Emperor was at the same time credited with the wish of going down to posterity as the keeper of European peace. The view taken by German writers of Russia's military preparations reminds me of what a witty Frenchman wrote many years ago: "*Cet animal est bien méchant. Quand on l'attaque, il se défend.*"

The last audience which I had with the Emperor before the outbreak of war has already been recorded in Chapter IX. The questions discussed in it had reference exclusively to such countries as Persia, Thibet and Afghanistan, where British and Russian interests were likely to clash. The Emperor said nothing about Germany, but urged that the conversations proceeding between our two Governments with reference to the aforesaid countries should be brought to as speedy a conclusion as possible, "in order that," as His Majesty remarked, "we might be able to sleep comfortably in our beds without fear of any breach being made in the Anglo-Russian understanding."

This last audience took place on June 15, after the luncheon given by the Emperor at Tsarskoe to Admiral Beatty and the officers of the First Battle-cruiser Squadron, which had just arrived at Cronstadt on a complimentary visit to Russia. The welcome accorded them by the Emperor, as well as by the general public,

was of the warmest, while the naval and municipal authorities entertained them with true Russian hospitality. The Emperor paid a visit of inspection to the squadron, which was composed of the *Lion*, *Queen Mary*, *Princess Royal* and *New Zealand*, and, together with the Empress and his four daughters, honoured Admiral Beatty with his presence at luncheon on board his flagship. Never have I seen happier faces than those of the young Grand Duchesses as they were escorted over the *Lion* by a little band of middies specially told off for their amusement; and when I think of them as I saw them that day, the tragic story of their deaths seems like some hideous nightmare.

On July 20 the President of the French Republic, M. Poincaré, arrived on an official visit to the Russian Court. There were the usual reviews, banquets and toasts. The international outlook, which was not reassuring, naturally formed the subject of their private conversations, but the Emperor, though preoccupied, still believed in the pacific intentions of the Emperor William. On the 21st the President held a reception of the heads of foreign missions. While I was awaiting my turn to be conducted to the room where he was receiving the Ambassadors, the Serbian Minister engaged me in conversation. Speaking with considerable emotion, he called my attention to the threatening attitude of Austria, and said that Serbia was faced with the gravest crisis in her history. M. Poincaré, to whom I repeated what M. Spalaikovitch had told me, afterwards broached the subject in his conversation with the Austrian Ambassador, but failed to elicit any satisfactory assurance as to Austria's attitude. On the

evening of the 23rd the President started on his homeward journey.

As several weeks had elapsed since the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand without any move on Austria's part, there seemed reason to hope that she had renounced the idea of any punitive action. I had myself been granted leave of absence and had already taken tickets for our journey to England. As I was sitting in my study the next morning (the 24th) musing on all that I was going to do during my approaching holiday, I was roused by the ringing of the telephone. "Who's there?" I asked. "I, Sazonoff," was the reply. "Austria has presented an ultimatum at Belgrade couched in terms which mean war. Please meet me at the French Embassy in an hour's time as I must discuss matters with you and Paléologue."

CHAPTER XV

1914

AUSTRIA had carefully timed the presentation of her ultimatum so that it should coincide with the departure from St. Petersburg of the President of the French Republic and the President of the French Council of Ministers on their return journey to France, a journey that would take at least four days. I knew that Austria's action would be regarded at St. Petersburg as a direct challenge to Russia, and I was not sorry, therefore, to have an hour wherein to reflect on its possible consequences, more especially as I foresaw that the conversation of the French Embassy would turn on the crucial question of British solidarity with France and Russia.

Nor was I mistaken. After pointing out how utterly unacceptable were some of her demands, M. Sazonoff remarked that Austria would never have presented such an ultimatum unless she had assured herself beforehand of Germany's approval and support. Could Russia, he proceeded to inquire, equally count on the support of her partners in the Triple Entente? The French Ambassador, to whom he first addressed this question, assured him that France would give Russia her diplomatic support and would also, if necessity arose, fulfil all the obligations entailed by her alliance. "And your Government?" next inquired M. Sazonoff,

turning to me. I replied that though I could not speak in the name of His Majesty's Government, I had no doubt that they would give them all the diplomatic support in their power. I could not, however, hold out any hope of their making a declaration of solidarity that would entail an unconditional engagement to support France and Russia by force of arms on behalf of a country like Serbia, where no direct British interests were involved. Such an engagement would not be sanctioned by British public opinion; and, unless backed by public opinion, no British Government could take upon themselves the responsibility of pledging their country to war. To this M. Sazonoff objected that we must not forget that the Serbian was but a part of the general European question and that, in view of the vital interests at stake, we could not afford to efface ourselves altogether. I replied that I gathered that he wished us to join Russia in making a communication to Austria to the effect that we would not tolerate any active intervention by her in the internal affairs of Serbia; but, supposing that Austria nevertheless took military measures against Serbia, was it, I asked, the intention of the Russian Government forthwith to declare war on her? While expressing the personal opinion that Russia would have to mobilize, M. Sazonoff said that the whole question would be considered by a Council of Ministers over which the Emperor would preside. I therefore urged that the first and most important thing to do was to endeavour to induce Austria to extend the time limit of forty-eight hours and, at the same time, to find out how far Serbia was prepared to go to meet the demands formulated by Austria in her note. M. Sazonoff agreed, saying that some of

the Austrian demands could doubtless be accepted by Serbia.

The conversation, which had begun at noon, was continued after luncheon, when M. Sazonoff and M. Paléologue once more pressed me to declare British solidarity with Russia and France. Apart from the fact that it was quite outside my province to make any declaration that would bind His Majesty's Government, I was determined not to say one word that could be interpreted as an encouragement to Russia to declare war on Austria. To do so might not only have diminished any chance of a pacific solution of the question, but would, I knew, be seized on by Germany as an argument to prove—as she is still endeavouring to prove—that we had egged on Russia into war. I therefore confined myself to saying that His Majesty's Government might, I thought, be prepared to make strong representations at Berlin and Vienna, pointing out that, as an Austrian attack on Serbia would bring Russia into the field, it would be difficult for Great Britain to stand aside were the war to become general. This did not satisfy M. Sazonoff, who contended that we should render war more likely if we did not at once make common cause with Russia and France.

On receiving my telegraphic report of this conversation, Sir Edward Grey replied: "You spoke quite rightly in very difficult circumstances as to the attitude of His Majesty's Government. I entirely approve what you said and I cannot promise more on behalf of the Government."

To give an account of all the conversations held at the different capitals and of all the telegrams exchanged during the critical days which followed the presentation

of the Austrian ultimatum would require a book in itself. I shall, therefore, content myself with recording those which have a special bearing on Russia's attitude, and on the advice which we tendered at St. Petersburg, in order to show how unfounded are the statements of certain German writers who have endeavoured to throw on Great Britain and Russia the responsibility for the war.

To take but two of them—Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg and Baron von Schoen, who was Ambassador at Paris at the time. The former, in his "Betrachtungen zum Weltkriege," asserts that while Germany was doing all she could to restrain Austria, we refrained from giving counsels of moderation at St. Petersburg. The latter, in his "Memoirs of an Ambassador," goes a good deal farther. He accuses Russia of having brought about the war in order to stave off the danger of internal complications, and he accuses us of having never shown the slightest inclination to work for the maintenance of peace at St. Petersburg. He represents us as having, on the contrary, frustrated Germany's efforts to bring about a direct conversation between St. Petersburg and Vienna by encouraging Russia in her attitude of "intransigeance." He further states that it was the knowledge that she could rely on our support that determined Russia to mobilize.

On the other hand, his vindication of the course pursued by his own Government is so enlightening that I am tempted to reproduce it. Austria, he states, was competing with Russia for supremacy in the Balkans, while Germany stood behind her ally and protected her out of regard for her own interests. The Austrian

Government were determined to exact ample atonement for the Serajevo murder, which had demonstrated the necessity of crushing once for all at their centre (Belgrade) the subversive activities at work in the south-eastern portions of the Hapsburg monarchy. In order to secure really effective guarantees for the future the terms of the ultimatum had been made as harsh as possible, so that Serbia had either to make complete submission to Austria, to sacrifice some of her sovereign rights and to renounce her connexion with Russia—or to face the consequences. Germany, on being consulted, recognized that it was but a question of striking at the root of dangers which directly threatened the existence of her ally and indirectly her own. She could not reasonably refuse her consent and support, for were Austria, as a result of the undermining work being carried on by the Serbs, to fall to pieces, she would be of no further use to Germany as an ally. Germany, therefore, announced her intention of loyally adhering to her alliance and of preventing any disastrous intervention from outside. She proposed localizing the conflict, but her proposal was checkmated by Russia acting as Serbia's protector and declaring that the conflict could not leave her indifferent. Finally Baron von Schoen blames Sir Edward Grey for having proposed a conference of the four Powers not immediately interested, as, in doing so, he had contravened the principle of non-intervention on which Germany laid such stress. In a word, Germany, according to Baron von Schoen, undertook to keep the ring while Austria made Serbia her vassal, although she knew, from what had passed during the Balkan crisis, that Russia would never tolerate an Austrian attack on Serbia.

The following summary of my successive conversations with M. Sazonoff will show how different from this was the attitude of the Russian and the British Governments.

On July 25 we resumed our conversation of the preceding day. Austria, Sazonoff contended, aimed at establishing her hegemony in the Balkans, and the action which she had taken at Belgrade was directed against Russia. Germany's attitude, on the other hand, would be determined by ours. So long as she believed that she could count on our neutrality she would go all lengths; but if only we took our stand firmly by France and Russia there would be no war. If we failed them, rivers of blood would flow and we would in the end be dragged into the war. Though I feared that his prediction was likely to come true, I could but repeat what I had said to the Emperor in one of the audiences recorded in the preceding chapter, that we could play the rôle of mediator to better purpose as a friend who, if her counsels of moderation were disregarded, might be converted into an ally, than if we were at once to declare our complete solidarity with Russia. I, at the same time, expressed the earnest hope that Russia would give His Majesty's Government time to use their influence as peacemaker and that she would not precipitate matters by mobilizing. Were she to do so Germany would, I warned him, not be content with a counter-mobilization, but would at once declare war on her. Russia, M. Sazonoff replied, could not allow Austria to crush Serbia, but I might rest assured that she would take no military action unless absolutely forced to do so.

On the following day—July 26—he informed me that he had, in conversation with the Austrian Ambassador, suggested a direct conversation between Vienna and St. Petersburg for the purpose of finding a formula that, while giving satisfaction to Austria as regarded her principal demands, might prove more acceptable to Serbia. He had, he said, told Count Szapary that he quite understood the motives which had prompted Austria to present her ultimatum, and that if only she would consent to revise certain of its articles it would not be difficult to arrive at a satisfactory settlement.

In reply to a question which he addressed to me in the course of our conversation I told him that the language which I had held to him on the 24th had been approved by Sir E. Grey as correctly defining the attitude of His Majesty's Government. They would, I added, use all their influence to avert war; but if their efforts were to be successful it was essential that Russia should not mobilize save in the very last resort.

On my communicating to him on July 27 Sir E. Grey's proposal for a conference of the four Ambassadors in London, M. Sazonoff replied: "I have begun a conversation with the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador under conditions which I think may be favourable for a revision of the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia. Should direct explanations with Vienna prove impossible I am ready to accept Sir E. Grey's proposal or any other proposal of a nature to bring about a favourable solution of the conflict."

In consequence of the threatening international outlook orders had been given to the British fleet, concentrated at Portland, not to disperse for manœuvre leave.

In informing the Russian Ambassador of the above fact Sir Edward Grey was careful to explain that this must not be taken to mean anything more than a promise of diplomatic action.

On July 28 things took a decided turn for the worse. Not only did Count Berchtold decline M. Sazonoff's proposal for a direct conversation between the two Governments, but Austria declared war on Serbia. No assurance which Austria might give as to the integrity and independence of Serbia would, M. Sazonoff told me, satisfy Russia, and the order for mobilization against Austria would be given on the day that the Austrian army crossed the Serbian frontier. I, nevertheless, once more urged him to refrain from any military measures which might be construed as a challenge by Germany.

I repeated the gist of this conversation to my French colleague, whom I found in the ante-room awaiting his turn to be received, and begged him to speak in the same sense. The situation, I said, was becoming critical. Russia was in earnest and would never allow Austria to crush Serbia. But if war was forced on Russia it was important that she should not give Germany any pretext for representing her as the aggressor. For, unless convinced that the whole responsibility for the war rested with Germany, British public opinion would never sanction our participation in it.

Baron von Schoen, in his "Memoirs," translates a passage from "La Russie des Tsars dans la Grande Guerre," in which M. Paléologue records my above-mentioned remarks, and reads into them a meaning which they do not possess. He makes me say: "Russia is determined to go to war. We must, therefore,

saddle Germany with the whole responsibility and initiative of the attack, as this will be the only way of winning over public opinion in England to the war." He goes on to represent me as egging on Russia to fight, while endeavouring to throw all the blame on Germany. This is a wanton misrepresentation of my attitude, as I had—as I have already shown—said all that I possibly could to discourage mobilization, knowing that it would furnish Germany with the pretext which she wanted for declaring war on Russia.

The German Ambassador at St. Petersburg had all along been under the impression that the Russian public had not been greatly stirred by the Austro-Serbian conflict and that only a small clique of chauvinists was endeavouring to give it an acute character. As he happened to be lunching with me at the Embassy on the 28th I took the opportunity of opening his eyes to the growing danger of the situation. He had asked me to impress prudence on Sazonoff, and I told him that I had done so from the outset. It was, I added, time for the German Ambassador at Vienna to speak seriously to Count Berchtold, for, if Germany allowed Austria to attack Serbia, a general war would be the inevitable result. Count Pourtales, who was greatly upset by this remark, protested that Russia and not Germany was responsible for the existing tension. He was, I believe, personally anxious to avert war, and had probably been kept in the dark as to the real intentions of his Government. But his attitude was not calculated to smooth over matters. He held that Austria had to administer a severe chastisement to Serbia, while Russia had to look on quietly and maintain the passive rôle of a disinterested spectator. Were she, on the contrary,

to carry out her projected mobilization, she would, he contended, be endangering the peace of Europe. It was in vain that I argued that Russia had shown her pacific intentions by accepting the proposal for a conference *à quatre*, and by declaring her readiness to abide by any decision which that conference might take, that had the approval of France and Great Britain. Nor would he listen to me when I reminded him that Austria had not only partially mobilized but had actually declared war on Serbia. "I cannot," he replied, "discuss anything that Austria has done."

Though Austria had already begun mobilizing against Serbia on the 26th, it was only on the 28th that Russia took any preliminary steps for a mobilization in the military districts of Kieff, Odessa, Kazan and Moscow. Between one and two o'clock on the afternoon of July 29 Count Pourtales had an interview with M. Sazonoff, in which he reminded the latter that, in the event of such a partial mobilization, Germany's treaty of alliance with Austria would automatically cause German mobilization. About seven o'clock the same evening Count Pourtales again called at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and communicated to M. Sazonoff a telegram from the German Chancellor stating that any further development of Russia's military preparations would compel Germany to take counter-measures and that this would mean war.

As such language was almost tantamount to an ultimatum, and as the Russian War Office had, meanwhile, received information of the extensive military preparations that Germany was secretly making, as well as of the Austrian general mobilization, the whole situation had to be reconsidered. In the course of the even-

ing the Emperor, yielding to the pressure brought to bear on him by his military advisers, unwillingly consented to order a general mobilization. A few hours after doing so he received the following telegram from the German Emperor:

"I believe that a direct understanding between your Government and Vienna is possible—an understanding which my Government is endeavouring to promote. Naturally military measures by Russia, which might be construed as a menace by Austria-Hungary, would accelerate a calamity which both of us desire to avoid."

To this the Emperor Nicholas replied:

"Thanks for your telegram, which is conciliatory, while the official message, presented by your Ambassador to my Foreign Minister, was conveyed in a very different tone. I beg you to explain the difference. It would be right to submit the Austro-Serbian question to the Hague Conference. I trust in your wisdom and friendship."

After despatching this telegram the Emperor Nicholas successively rang up on the telephone the Minister of War and the Chief of the General Staff and countermanded the general mobilization. That mobilization had already commenced, and to stop it would, as both the generals protested, throw the whole military machine out of gear. The Emperor, nevertheless, insisted; but in spite of his categorical orders the military authorities allowed the general mobilization to proceed without his knowledge.

Meanwhile the German Ambassador had learned what was going on, and at two o'clock on the morning of July 30 called at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Seeing that war was now inevitable, he broke down and appealed to Sazonoff to make some suggestion for him to telegraph to his Government. Sazonoff thereupon drew up the following formula:

"If Austria, recognizing that the conflict with Serbia has assumed the character of a question of European interest, declares herself ready to eliminate from her ultimatum the points which violate the principles of Serbia's sovereignty, Russia engages to stop all military preparations."

Sazonoff, who had been informed by the Chief of the General Staff of the telephonic conversation which he had had during the night with the Emperor, had an audience with His Majesty early in the afternoon of the 30th. Before proceeding to Peterhof he had received the news of the Austrian bombardment of Belgrade and of the refusal of the German Government to consider the formula which he had given to Count Pourtales. He found the Emperor greatly perturbed by a telegram which he had just received from the German Emperor. "My Ambassador," the latter stated, "has instructions to direct the attention of your Government to the dangers and serious consequences of mobilization. I have told you the same in my last telegram. Austria-Hungary has mobilized only against Serbia and only a part of the army. If Russia mobilizes against Austria-Hungary, the part of mediator, with which you have entrusted me in such a friendly manner and which I have accepted at your express desire, is threatened, if not rendered impossible. The entire weight of the decision now rests on your shoulders. You have to bear the responsibility of war or peace." The Emperor Nicholas felt so keenly the

gravity of the decision which he had to take that he still shrank from sanctioning a general mobilization. Only after that Sazonoff had assured him that he could do so with a clear conscience, as his Government had not left a stone unturned in their efforts to avert war, did the Emperor finally decide not to leave his country defenceless against the offensive which Germany was already preparing. At four o'clock the same afternoon His Majesty caused the necessary orders to be telephoned to the Ministry of War.

He had already, earlier in the afternoon of the 30th, telegraphed as follows to the Emperor William: "I am sending Tattischeff with instructions to-night. The military measures now taking form were decided on five days ago for reasons of defence against Austria. I hope with all my heart that these measures will not in any way influence your position as mediator, which I prize very highly. We need your strong pressure on Austria in order that an understanding may be arrived at."

On the following day—the 31st—he telegraphed again: "It is impossible for me, for technical reasons, to suspend my military preparations. But so long as the pourparlers with Austria are not broken off my troops will abstain from any offensive. I give you my word of honour."

The Emperor William replied: "I have gone as far as it is possible for me to go in my efforts to maintain peace. It is not I who will have to bear the responsibility for the horrible disaster that now threatens the whole civilized world. It still rests with you to dispel it. My friendship for you and your Empire, which my grandfather bequeathed me on his deathbed, is always sacred for me. I have been true to Russia when mis-

fortune befell her, especially during the last war. At the present moment you can still save the peace of Europe by stopping your military preparations."

On the same day—the 31st—Sazonoff made a final effort to safeguard peace by modifying, at Sir E. Grey's request, the formula which he had given Count Pourtales so that it should read as follows:

"If Austria consents to stay the march of her troops on Serbian territory, and if, recognizing that the Austro-Serbian conflict has assumed the character of a question of European interest, she admits that the Great Powers may examine the satisfaction which Serbia can accord to the Austro-Hungarian Government, without prejudice to her sovereign rights and to her independence as a State, Russia undertakes to preserve her waiting attitude."

The Emperor, who received the German Ambassador in audience the same afternoon, endeavoured to impress on him the conciliatory spirit in which this formula had been drafted and the prospect which it offered of an honourable settlement of the conflict, but without success.

At eleven o'clock that night Count Pourtales went to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and informed M. Sazonoff that unless Russia stopped her mobilization before noon the next day, the whole German army would be mobilized. In reply to his passionate appeal for immediate demobilization Sazonoff could but repeat the assurance that so long as the Austro-Russian pourparlers continued, Russia would not take the offensive. There were at that moment signs of a relaxation of the tension between Vienna and St. Petersburg; there had been friendly conversations between their respective

Foreign Ministers and Ambassadors, and the Austrian Government seemed even disposed to admit a discussion on the interpretation to be placed on the text of their note to the Serbian Government. But Germany willed it otherwise.

On the morning of August 1 the Emperor Nicholas once more telegraphed to the Emperor William: "I understand that you are forced to mobilize, but I should like to receive from you the same guarantee which I have given you, namely, that these measures do not mean war and that we shall continue to negotiate for the welfare of our two countries and for the universal peace which is so dear to us. With the aid of God it must be possible for our long-tried friendship to prevent the shedding of blood. I expect with full confidence your urgent reply."

To this the Emperor William, after stating that the time limit had expired and that he had been forced to mobilize his army, replied: "An immediate, clear and unmistakable reply of your Government is the sole way to avoid endless misery. Until I receive this reply I am unable, to my great grief, to enter upon the subject of your telegram. I must ask most earnestly that you, without delay, order your troops to commit under no circumstances the slightest violation of our frontiers."

About five o'clock that afternoon I received a telegram from the Foreign Office instructing me to ask for an immediate audience in order to deliver to the Emperor a personal message from King George, in which His Majesty, after referring to the representations which Germany had made on the subject of the Russian mobilization, proceeded to say: "I cannot help thinking that some misunderstanding has produced

this deadlock. I am most anxious not to miss any possibility of avoiding the terrible calamity which at present threatens the whole world. I therefore make a personal appeal to you to remove the misapprehension which I feel must have occurred, and to leave still open grounds for negotiation and possible peace. If you think I can in any way contribute to that all-important purpose I will do everything in my power to assist in reopening the interrupted conversations between the Powers concerned. I feel confident that you are as anxious as I am that all that is possible should be done to secure the peace of the world."

About a quarter past seven M. Sazonoff, who had arranged that I should be received by the Emperor at Peterhof at ten o'clock, rang me up on the telephone to tell me that Count Pourtales had just informed him that Germany considered herself in a state of war with Russia. He came to dine with me at eight o'clock, bringing with him a draft reply to the King's telegram for me to submit to the Emperor. I left the Embassy at nine o'clock, but owing to something having gone wrong with the electric lights on my motor, the chauffeur took a wrong turn and I only reached Peterhof at a quarter to eleven. After apologizing to the Emperor for being so late I handed him the King's telegram as well as the draft reply which Sazonoff had drawn up. When His Majesty had finished reading them I ventured to suggest that it would be better were he to answer the King in his own words rather than in the official style of the reply which had been drafted at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. "I will do so if you will help me," replied the Emperor, "for talking English is a very different thing to writing it correctly." His

Majesty then asked me to sit down, and we discussed for more than an hour the situation that had been created by the Austrian ultimatum, the ineffectual efforts that had been made by both the Russian and the British Governments to preserve peace, and the reasons which had forced Russia to mobilize. Mobilization, His Majesty insisted, did not necessarily entail war, and he had given the Emperor William the most categorical assurances in this sense. Then, getting up and going to his writing table, he took some telegraph forms and a pencil and proceeded to write his answer, consulting me from time to time as to how he should turn a phrase if he were at a loss for a word. When he had finished he gave me the autograph telegram to have ciphered on my return to the Embassy. The text was as follows :

"I would gladly have accepted your proposals had not the German Ambassador this afternoon presented a note to my Government declaring war. Ever since presentation of the ultimatum at Belgrade, Russia has devoted all her efforts to finding some pacific solution of the question raised by Austria's action. Object of that action was to crush Serbia and make her a vassal of Austria. Effect of this would have been to upset balance of power in Balkans, which is of such vital interest to my Empire. Every proposal, including that of your Government, was rejected by Germany and Austria, and it was only when favourable moment for bringing pressure to bear on Austria had passed that Germany showed any disposition to mediate. Even then she did not put forward any precise proposal. Austria's declaration of war on Serbia forced me to order a partial mobilization, though in view of threaten-

ing situation my military advisers strongly advised a general mobilization owing to quickness with which Germany can mobilize in comparison with Russia. I was eventually compelled to take this course in consequence of complete Austrian mobilization, of the bombardment of Belgrade, of concentration of Austrian troops in Galicia, and of secret military preparations being made in Germany. That I was justified in doing so is proved by Germany's sudden declaration of war, which was quite unexpected by me, as I had given most categorical assurances to the Emperor William that my troops would not move so long as mediation negotiations continued.

"In this solemn hour I wish to assure you once more that I have done all in my power to avert war. Now that it has been forced on me, I trust your country will not fail to support France and Russia. God bless and protect you."

It was past one o'clock when I reached the Embassy to find the door blocked by an enthusiastic crowd eager to know whether Russia could count on England's support.

CHAPTER XVI

1914

IN the previous chapter I have given what, from personal knowledge, I believe to be a straightforward and accurate account of Russia's attitude during the nine critical days which preceded the war. Nothing that she did, or that she left undone, can possibly be cited against her as evidence of what Baron von Schoen terms her "will for war." In his endeavours to preserve peace, Sazonoff did not reject a single suggestion that was made him. He successively accepted proposals for a conference of four, for mediation by Great Britain and Italy, and for a direct conversation between Austria and Russia. Germany and Austria, on the other hand, either declined these proposals altogether or prevented their materializing by replying in evasive terms. There was one thing that Sazonoff could not do. He could not allow Austria to crush Serbia. Germany and Austria knew this quite well, for they had during the Balkan crisis been given clearly to understand that an Austrian attack on Serbia would bring Russia into the field. Russia, it is true, mobilized, but not until mobilization had been forced upon her by the discovery of Germany's secret military preparations as well as by Austria's threatening attitude. Germany was perfectly aware that the military programme adopted by Russia

after the passing of the new German Army Bill in 1913 would not be completed till 1918, and she also knew that the Russian army was inadequately equipped for war on modern scientific lines. It was the psychological moment to strike, and Germany seized it. On the day on which she despatched her final ultimatum to St. Petersburg a high official of the German Foreign Office told the representative of a then neutral Power that the only thing which his Government feared was that Russia would, at the eleventh hour, climb down and accept it. I know this as a fact, as it was told me at the time by the representative of the said neutral Power at St. Petersburg.

As regards our own attitude, I have explained the reasons which prompted the language that I consistently held to Sazonoff. Russia never received from us any promise of armed support or any assurance of a nature to encourage her to push matters to extremes. Up to the very last His Majesty's Government reserved their full freedom of action, though they did, as was but right, warn the German Government not to be misled by our friendly language into thinking that we should stand aside were British interests to become involved.

I am reluctantly compelled to make a personal statement in order to rebut certain charges which have been brought against me. In its issue of April 8, 1922, the *Graphic* published two paragraphs which, after suggesting as an appropriate title for a future book the words, "Someone has blundered," went on to say: "The men of little faith would come badly off. A typical example is afforded in M. Paléologue's new book on Russia in 1914. Sir George Buchanan is said to

have said to M. Sazonoff, 'I am afraid our public opinion is far from understanding that our national interest so evidently commands us to' [remain neutral in the Great War]." The words in brackets are the *Graphic's*.

I should not have taken any notice of this silly paragraph had not a friend shortly afterwards told me that people were asking when I was going to answer the charges brought against me by Paléologue. I replied that Paléologue was an old friend, who had been my colleague both at Petrograd and Sofia, and that I was not aware that he had said anything but good of me. I would, however, read his book. On doing so, I found that he makes me say, on July 24, 1914: "*Mais je crains que notre opinion publique ne soit encore très éloignée de comprendre ce que l'intérêt national nous commande avec tant d'évidence.*" Supposing that I did actually use these words, I would ask whether, on the day following the presentation of the Austrian ultimatum, public opinion in England would have been behind the Government had they, then and there, pledged the country to war on account of what was at that moment regarded as a quarrel between Austria and Serbia. But, quite apart from this question, the *Graphic* has not only mistranslated the passage above quoted, but has, by adding the words "remain neutral in the Great War," read into it, for the benefit of its readers, a meaning which it cannot possibly have. This is quite clear from the context. Sazonoff had, according to Paléologue, said, "*La neutralité de l'Angleterre équivaut à son suicide.*" "*C'est ma conviction,*" I am reported to have answered, while the rest of my reply, if correctly

translated, would read as follows: "But I am afraid that our public opinion is still far from understanding *what* our national interest so clearly commands us to do."

Why, I should like to know, did the *Graphic* have recourse to such deliberate misrepresentation? My personal views with regard to our participation in the war were expressed at the time in my official correspondence with the Foreign Office. In handing me, on the night of August 1–2, his reply to the King's telegram the Emperor begged me to second his appeal for British support, and I did not hesitate to do so. I ventured to tell His Majesty's Government that, were we to stand aside, we should be left without a friend in Europe; that we could not, out of regard for our own safety, allow Germany to crush France; that we should be forced to intervene sooner or later in the war, and that the longer that we postponed intervention the heavier would be the price which we should have to pay.

Owing to the fact that this telegram reached the Foreign Office in a mutilated form, breaking off in the middle of a sentence, it could not be published in the White Book, that, with this one exception, recorded all the communications which passed between me and that department during those critical days.

On the day following Germany's declaration of war a solemn service was held in the Winter Palace, the French Ambassador, as the representative of Russia's ally, being the only foreigner invited. At its close one of the officiating priests read the Imperial war manifesto, in which the Emperor told his people: "We have not only to succour a kindred land that has been

unjustly attacked, but to safeguard the honour and dignity of Russia as a great Power. . . .

"In this dread hour of trial may all internal differences be forgotten! May the union of the Tsar and his people become closer and stronger!"

Then, approaching the altar and taking the Gospel in his right hand, the Emperor addressed the officers present as follows: "I salute in you my whole army. I solemnly swear not to make peace so long as there is a single enemy on Russia's soil."

When, a few minutes later, the Sovereigns appeared on the balcony, the huge crowd that filled the square in front of the Winter Palace fell on their knees, singing the National Anthem.

The oath thus taken by the Emperor Nicholas was modelled textually on that sworn by the Emperor Alexander I when the Emperor Napoleon invaded Russia. For the moment, too, the Russian people were animated by the same spirit that had inspired their forefathers in 1812, though this time the sacrifices demanded of them were to prove greater than they could bear.

During the first three days of the war my position was not a pleasant one. Impatient crowds kept demonstrating before the Embassy clamouring for news from London and demanding in no friendly tones whether Russia could count on our support. I pacified them as best I could with vague assurances, but great was my relief when, at five o'clock in the morning of the 5th, one of my secretaries brought me the laconic message from the Foreign Office: "War—Germany—Act," which told me that England had proved true to herself and to her partners in the Triple Entente. I telephoned

the good news to the French Embassy, to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and to the Emperor at Tsarskoe, and later in the morning attended a solemn Mass in the French Catholic church as the representative of the ally of France and Russia. On my return to the Embassy I found many floral offerings awaiting me which had been sent by Russians of all sorts and conditions as a tribute of gratitude to their new ally.

During those wonderful early August days Russia seemed to have been completely transformed. The German Ambassador had predicted that the declaration of war would provoke a revolution. He had even declined to listen to a friend who had advised him, on the eve of his departure, to send his collection of art treasures to the Hermitage for safe keeping, as the Hermitage would, he foretold, be one of the first buildings to be sacked. Unfortunately for him, the only act of mob violence throughout the whole Russian Empire was the wholesale looting of the German Embassy on August 4. Instead of provoking a revolution, the war forged a new bond between Sovereign and people. The workmen proclaimed a truce to strikes, and the various political parties laid aside their grievances. In the Duma, which the Emperor had convoked for an extraordinary session, the leaders of the different parties vied with each other in supporting the Government whom they had but a few weeks earlier been denouncing. The military credits were voted unanimously, and even the Socialists—who abstained from voting—exhorted the workmen to defend their country against the invader. In thus rallying round the Throne Liberals and progressives were animated by the hope that the war, which had brought the Emperor into such

close touch with his people, would inaugurate a new era of constitutional reforms.

But it was at Moscow, where, in accordance with the traditions of his house, the Emperor went to worship at the holy shrines of the Kremlin, that the heart of Russia voiced the feelings of the whole nation. The French Ambassador and I, together with my wife and daughter, had been invited to assist at the coming ceremonies. On the morning of August 6 we proceeded to the Kremlin, and were conducted to the great gallery of the palace, where a crowd of high officials and notables of every kind, as well as representatives of municipal and other institutions, were awaiting the arrival of the Sovereigns. Soon afterwards the Emperor and Empress, followed by the Grand Duchess Elisabeth, the four young Grand Duchesses and the little Tsarevitch (who, having hurt his leg, was carried in the arms of a huge Cossack), made their entrance. Stopping in the middle of the gallery, the Emperor made a short speech in which, after saying that he had come to Moscow to find strength in prayer, he spoke of the splendid spirit with which all classes of his subjects had responded to his call to arms, and concluded by invoking God's blessing on the allied armies.

Then joining the procession that was formed, we followed the Imperial family through a number of rooms and down the famous "Red Staircase" to the *Ouspensky Sabor*—or Cathedral of the Assumption—where the Emperors were crowned. The appearance of Their Majesties was greeted with a storm of applause, while the bells of all the churches of Moscow rang out a peal of welcome. The service

which followed was beautiful and impressive beyond description. The long line of archbishops and bishops, in their vestments of gold brocade, their mitres sparkling with precious stones; the frescoes on the walls, with their golden background; the jewelled icons—all lent colour and brilliancy to the picture presented by the glorious old cathedral.

As soon as we had taken our places behind the Imperial family the deep bass voice of a priest was heard chanting the opening passages of the liturgy, and then the choir, joining in, flooded the church with harmony as it intoned the psalms and hymns of the Orthodox ritual. As the service was nearing its close the Emperor and Empress, followed by the Grand Duchesses, went the round of the church, kneeling in deep devotion before each of its shrines or kissing some specially sacred icon presented them by the Metropolitan. Nor, when the doors were opened, was the scene outside less impressive. Walking along a slightly raised narrow platform to the other wing of the palace, with nothing but a low railing to separate him from the kneeling multitude of his subjects—some of whom even kissed the ground as he passed—the Emperor was acclaimed with one never-ending cheer. Stopping for a moment and inviting the French Ambassador and me to keep near him, His Majesty said, "These acclamations are addressed to you as well as to me."

As I drove away with my French colleague to our hotel I could not help wondering how long this national enthusiasm would last, and what would be the feeling of the people for their "Little Father" were the war to be unduly prolonged.

I do not propose to follow the Russian armies through all the successive phases of the war, as this has already been admirably done by my friend and former military attaché, Major-General Sir Alfred Knox, in his book, "With the Russian Armies, 1914–1917." I shall therefore content myself with a brief sketch of the principal events in the Eastern theatre of war, with reference more especially to their bearing on the general Russian situation.

Yielding to the pressure brought to bear on him by his Ministers, the Emperor had renounced his intention of assuming the command of the armies, and had appointed the Grand Duke Nicolas Nicolaievich commander-in-chief. Though Germany had declared war on Russia on August 1, it was only on the 6th that Austria, who had brought the war about, followed her example and recalled her Ambassador. According to the plan of campaign drawn up by the General Staff, Russia was at once to take the offensive in the south against Austria and to act on the defensive in the north till everything was in order for the far more serious business of an advance against Germany. Had Russia only consulted her own interests this would undoubtedly have been the wisest course for her to follow, but she had also to think of her allies. The advance of the German armies in the west rendered it imperative for her to make a diversion in the east. The original plan of campaign was accordingly changed, and on August 17—the day following the completion of the mobilization—General Rennenkampf took the offensive and made a raid into East Prussia.

For the first ten days his operations were attended with such complete success that it was even hoped that

the whole province would soon be at his mercy. He had, however, advanced farther than was prudent under the circumstances. The German General Staff, alarmed at the number of fugitives who kept streaming into Berlin, caused troops to be transferred from the west, and sent General von Hindenburg to take over the command in the east. At the same time, owing to the forced retirement of the allied armies in the west, the French Ambassador was instructed to urge the Russian Government to press home the offensive in East Prussia. In the opinion of the best Russian generals such an offensive was premature and doomed to failure. The army was not yet thoroughly organized in all its branches. The difficulties of transport were tremendous: the troops were not properly concentrated, and the country, with its forests, lakes and marshes, was not inaptly likened to a sponge that would suck up all who entered it. But Russia could not turn a deaf ear to the appeal of an ally whose capital was threatened by the enemy, and Samsonoff's army was ordered to advance.

The battle of Tannenberg was the result. Owing to tactical errors on the part of the corps commanders on the flanks and to the lack of the necessary means of communication between them and Samsonoff, the two central corps were left without support and had to lay down their arms. The Russians lost all their artillery as well as vast quantities of shells and other war material which they could ill spare. In the course of a few more weeks the Germans, following up their victory, cleared the whole province of the enemy, inflicting on them a total loss of a quarter of a million of men besides striking a serious blow at the *morale*

of their army and the prestige of its commanders. Though later in the year the Russians re-entered East Prussia and overran the frontier districts, they had in the following February to evacuate it for good.

This disaster in the north was counterbalanced to some extent by the brilliant victories gained in the south, where General Ivanoff was in command, with General Alexeieff as Chief of the Staff. The Austrians were driven back by the armies under Generals Ruzsky, Brussiloff and Radko Dimitrieff; Lemberg was taken early in September, and in November the great fortress of Przemysl was invested. The Austrians lost in all 1,000 guns and 200,000 prisoners. This rapid advance raised in many quarters exaggerated hopes for the future, and my French colleague was at one moment so optimistic that he even bet me £5 that the war would be over by Christmas. But the Russian "steam roller," in its endeavours to relieve the pressure in the west, had been pushing on at a pace that ill suited its cumbrous mechanism. Russia was heavily handicapped. She had to move troops and supplies enormous distances on bad roads, and in Poland, which the Germans had entered at the beginning of the war, she had to fight in a country flanked on either side by hostile territory. In October the Germans were almost at the gates of Warsaw. The opportune arrival of the Siberian contingent effected a welcome change in the situation. The Russian offensive was resumed, the Germans were driven back and narrowly escaped a crushing defeat at Lodz. They were only saved by the reinforcements which, thanks to their network of strategic railways, they were able to bring up in time. The tables were once more turned in their favour, the Russians had to

retire, and by the middle of December their offensive was totally arrested. The curtain had risen on the opening act of the great Russian tragedy.

On September 25 General Joffre had inquired whether Russia's supply of ammunition was sufficient to meet the prevailing high rate of consumption, and had received the comforting assurance that there was no cause for anxiety on that score. Then suddenly, on December 18, the French Ambassador and I were informed by the Chief of the Staff at the Ministry for War that, though Russia had in her depots men enough and to spare to make good her colossal losses in the war, she had no rifles wherewith to arm them and that her reserves of artillery ammunition were exhausted. General Bielaieff added that orders were being placed abroad and that steps were being taken to increase the output of the national factories, but that for the next two or three months the military situation would be not only difficult but dangerous. This announcement came as a bolt from the blue. In that early stage of the war there was little, if any, co-ordination in the plans of the Allied Commanders-in-Chief in their respective theatres of war and they were too much inclined to adhere to the system of watertight compartments. An offensive would be taken in the west when the Russians in the east were obliged to remain on the defensive, and *vice versâ*, with the result that the Germans kept special army corps, which they sent backwards and forwards from the one front to the other, wherever their presence was the most needed.

In protesting at the time against the secrecy that had been observed with regard to Russia's shortage of ammunition, I urged the necessity of closer contact

being established between the Allied General Staffs. The Russians had apparently based their calculations on their experiences in the Japanese War, and had not made provision for a war of longer duration. I remember once asking a distinguished member of the Duma who was, during the Balkan crisis, advocating the adoption by the Entente of a firmer policy, whether Russia was ready to face a European war. "No," was his reply; "but she never will be ready." He was right. Her industries were still in a backward state; she had not sufficient factories, and those which she had often lacked the requisite machinery and the necessary number of skilled workmen. The rearmament of Russia was, indeed, soon to become one of the most difficult problems which the Allies had to face. Though I personally did not share the pessimism that had already struck root in Petrograd, as the Russian capital had been rechristened, I felt that there was but little chance of her opening the road to Berlin through Silesia, and that her future rôle would have to be restricted to wearing out and gradually destroying the enemy forces in a war of attrition.

In addition to the feeling of discouragement occasioned by the military situation, the peace campaign being conducted by Count Witte and his band of Germanophils could not but be regarded as a disquieting sign. Count Witte, as I have already stated in Chapter XIV, had always held that Russia's interests dictated a close understanding with Germany, and he was now openly declaring that Russia had nothing to gain by continuing the war and ought to make peace. In one of our conversations with Sazonoff early in

November, my French colleague urged that it was time that the Emperor should take some action with regard to a campaign that was assuming dangerous proportions. Sazonoff thereupon suggested that the French Ambassador should himself bring the matter to the Emperor's notice and promised to arrange an audience for the purpose. In this audience, which took place a week later, the Emperor did not mention Count Witte's name, and Paléologue did not therefore venture to broach the subject himself.

As Count Witte's attacks were mainly directed against Great Britain, I determined to take up his challenge, and I did so in a speech which I made at the English Club on New Year's Eve. "We were," I said, "being accused by certain well-known Germanophils of having pushed Russia into the war for our own selfish ends and of now leaving her to bear the brunt of it. We were constantly being asked by these gentlemen, 'Where is your navy?' 'What is your army doing?' I will tell them," I proceeded to say, "what the British army and navy have done"; and after enumerating all the services which they had rendered the Allied cause, I cited Germany—the special friend of our critics—as a witness to prove the truth of my statement. For it was to England that Germany's poets addressed their hymns of hate, and it was on England that Germany's professors poured the vials of their wrath; and they did so because they knew that the British Empire barred the way to the world dominion of which the Fatherland had dreamed. This speech had an enormous success. Not only was it published *in extenso* in all the leading Russian papers, but it was made the subject of long

leading articles, in which I was congratulated on having had the courage to open the sore from which Russia was suffering. The Emperor, whom I saw shortly afterwards, told me that he was very glad that I had been so outspoken.

It also had a sequel. A few days later I received the visit of a well-known journalist, who informed me that he had been sent by Count Witte, who was ill, to inquire whether what I had said in my speech was aimed at him. I replied that this was a question which I must decline to answer as there were so many Germanophils in Petrograd. They might all ask me the same question, and I could not really reply to each one individually. My journalistic friend was not satisfied, saying that Count Witte insisted on receiving an answer. I then said: "You can tell Count Witte from me that when I made my speech I had in my mind all those who had held the language of which I had complained, and that if the cap fits him he can wear it."

CHAPTER XVII

1914–15

ALMOST immediately after the opening of hostilities Sazonoff had made tentative efforts to secure the co-operation of benevolent neutrality of those States which, on account of their geographical position or territorial aspirations, were likely to be drawn into the conflict. Bulgaria was offered certain districts of Serbian Macedonia in the event of a victorious war resulting in Serbia obtaining access to the Adriatic; Roumania was tempted with the promise of the greater part of Transylvania and the northern half of the Bukowina; overtures were made to Italy with regard to Italia Irredenta, while His Majesty's Government were invited to open negotiations with Japan. Japan entered the war on August 22, but Roumania pleaded the close friendship that had so long existed between King Carol and the Emperor Franz Joseph as a reason for not entering the lists. It was only after King Carol's death in the following October that the interminable negotiations, which ended in Roumania taking the field when it was too late, were opened at Bucharest.

But the one question of paramount importance for Russia, more especially after the passage through the Straits of the *Goeben* and *Breslau*, was the attitude that Turkey would adopt. Negotiations were at once opened at Constantinople with a view to purchasing her

neutrality; but Germany's influence, enhanced by the prestige of her victories and by the presence of two of her warships off Constantinople, outweighed that of the Entente Powers and in the end carried the day. Early in October the Straits were closed, and a few weeks later two Turkish torpedo boats entered Odessa harbour and sank a Russian gunboat. The closing of the Straits was a paralysing blow for Russia. With only two ports —Vladivostock in the far east and Archangel in the north, that was ice-bound in winter—she was now virtually shut off from all communication with her allies in the West. The need of free access to the sea was thus brought home to the Russian public, whose eyes turned to Constantinople as the one great prize to be won by the war. Moscow led the movement, and the Emperor, in the manifesto issued after the recall of the allied Ambassadors from Constantinople, told his people that "Turkey's unwarranted intervention would but prepare the way for the solution of the historic problem bequeathed to us by our fathers on the shores of the Black Sea."

We were at the time engaged in a conversation with Russia on the subject of Persia. While raising no objection to the continued presence of Russian troops in Azerbaijan for the purpose of maintaining order, or to their passage through Persia in the event of a Turkish attack on that country, we did not wish her to act as Germany had acted in the case of Belgium and to violate Persia's neutrality. His Majesty's Government had, however, to take into account the new situation created by Turkey's entrance into the war and to give some satisfaction to the wishes and aspirations of the Russian people. They accordingly instructed me in

November to inform the Russian Government that in the event of our defeating Germany the fate of Constantinople and the Straits would have to be decided in conformity with Russia's needs. Though received by Sazonoff with a warm expression of his grateful appreciation, this communication was not quite precise enough to satisfy the Russian Government for long. During the winter months the movement had grown in intensity and, in the Duma, the veiled references of Ministers to the brilliant future opening for Russia on the shores of the Black Sea had been received with acclamation. Early in March Sazonoff spoke to the French Ambassador and me of the emotion which the question of Constantinople was evoking throughout the country and of the necessity of its radical solution. The Emperor, he said, felt that after all the sacrifices which he had imposed on his people he could no longer delay asking his allies for a definite assurance of their consent to the incorporation of Constantinople in the Russian Empire when once the war had been won.

On March 13 I was instructed to inform the Emperor personally that His Majesty's Government were prepared to give this assurance on certain conditions. Though not yet in a position to define all their own *desiderata*, the revision of the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 and the recognition of the neutral zone as a British sphere would have to be conceded by Russia. With regard to Constantinople they would attach the condition that an arrangement should be made for the commercial freedom of the Straits for merchant vessels as well as for a free port for goods in transit from and to non-Russian territory on the Black Sea. They would further expect Russia, among other

things, to do everything in her power to facilitate the participation of Roumania and Bulgaria in the war against Turkey and the Central Powers.

As the Emperor was leaving the next morning for the front, Sazonoff kindly arranged that I should accompany him to Tsarskoe and be received at the same time as himself in an audience which he was to have that evening.

The Emperor received us in his study, and after a few words of friendly greeting said to me: "You have a communication to make?" I replied that I was charged with a message which would, I trusted, give him as much pleasure to receive as it gave me to deliver, namely, that His Majesty's Government consented to the realization of Russia's secular aspirations with regard to Constantinople and the Straits on conditions which he would have no difficulty in accepting. I then enumerated those conditions. After desiring me to convey his warmest thanks to His Majesty's Government the Emperor inquired what was the existing arrangement with regard to the neutral zone. I explained the nature of that arrangement in general terms, adding that its incorporation in the British sphere would put an end to a constant cause of friction between our two Governments and would mark a great step in advance towards a final and friendly settlement of the Persian question. As the Emperor still hesitated, I ventured to say that had I a year ago brought him the offer of Constantinople in exchange for a declaration of Russia's *désinteressement* in the neutral zone, I had no doubt as to what His Majesty's answer would have been.

The Emperor laughed and said I was quite right.

On my asking whether I might inform my Government that His Majesty accepted their conditions in principle, Sazonoff intervened with the remark that Russia must in return be allowed complete liberty of action in her own sphere; not, he proceeded to explain, that she had any desire to annex North Persia, but because she wanted an end put to the representations which we were so constantly making about her action there. I replied that we also had not the slightest intention of annexing the neutral zone, and that our object, on the contrary, was to secure the maintenance of Persian integrity. This object was more likely to be attained were ambitious Russian consuls to be precluded, as they would be under the new arrangement, from pursuing a forward policy contrary to the wishes of their Government. At the same time the Russian and British representatives at Tehran might work out an agreement under which Russia could obtain sufficient liberty of action in her own sphere without violating the principle of Persian independence. Then, turning to the Emperor, I said that after the war Russia and Great Britain would be the two most powerful empires in the world. With the settlement of the Persian question the last cause of friction between them would disappear and the world's peace would then be assured. The Emperor cordially agreed. His Majesty then authorized me to say that he accepted our conditions in principle.

The rest of the audience was occupied with a discussion of Italy's claims to territorial compensation in Dalmatia and on the Adriatic. Taking an atlas, the Emperor followed Sazonoff's report, pointing out the exact position of every town and district mentioned

with a promptitude that surprised me. The negotiations with Italy had been complicated by the fact that many of her claims clashed with those of Serbia. It was the old question of Slav interests; and there was a strong party in Russia, including such influential personages as the Grand Duke Nicholas, that was opposed to the acceptance of some of her demands. They contended that Russia could not allow Italy to acquire a position on the Adriatic that would virtually make Serbia her vassal there, and that if Serbia's aspirations were left unsatisfied, we should in no distant future be confronted with fresh troubles if not with another war. In view of the vital importance of securing Italy's co-operation, I had to endeavour to overcome these objections and to induce the Russian Government to make the necessary concessions. Sazonoff, fortunately, was too broadminded to press these views unduly, and subordinating Russia's special interests to the general interests of the Allies, he finally accepted the arrangement under which Italy entered the war on May 23.

Negotiations had at the same time been proceeding with Roumania, Greece and Bulgaria, and from the language originally held by M. Bratiano we had reason to hope that Roumania would at once follow Italy's example. Though aware that Italy was on the point of declaring war on Austria, she let slip the favourable moment in the spring of 1915, when the Russians held the more important of the Carpathian heights, and when her co-operation with the Russian army might have saved the situation. The tide of war had now turned in Germany's favour, and the farther the Russians retired the less disposed was she to throw

down the gauntlet to the Central Powers. But, apart from the military question, the negotiations respecting the political agreement that was to record the price to be paid for her intervention dragged on for months. Bratiano demanded the Pruth and the Theiss as her future frontier, a demand that meant the incorporation in Roumania of both the Bukowine and the Banat.

From the point of view of her own national interests Russia was strongly opposed to Roumania's acquiring the whole of the Bukowine, while neither she nor her allies felt justified in extending Roumania's territory almost to the gates of Belgrade by promising her the whole of the Banat. But necessity is a hard taskmaster, and we could not afford to risk permission being given the Germans to despatch war material to the Turks through Roumania. Sazonoff first made the concession of allowing her to have the major part of the Bukowine, and then, bowing to the wishes of the Allies, he yielded on the question of the Banat. The latter concession was made subject to certain conditions proposed by Sir E. Grey for the safeguard of Serbia's interests and for the protection of her capital as well as on the understanding that the allied Powers would undertake to compensate Serbia by facilitating her union with Croatia if the latter consented. Sazonoff further attached the condition that Roumania should take the field within five weeks. This Bratiano declined to do. He was ready to conclude a political agreement on the above basis, but insisted that the actual date for taking action must depend on the military situation and on conditions to be embodied in a military convention.

The military situation, indeed, at the end of July

was such that Bratiano was probably right in saying that for Roumania to march at that moment would be to court certain disaster. It would have been different had we won over Bulgaria to our side, for her intervention would have so improved matters that Roumania could have afforded to run the risk. On the other hand, a definite assurance of Roumania's co-operation would have greatly facilitated our negotiations with Bulgaria. But we had, as Sazonoff remarked to me, been moving in a vicious circle. We had, he said, been trying to please everybody and had signally failed, as it was impossible to satisfy one of the Balkan States without offending the others. We had, therefore, to ask ourselves which of them could render us the most effective assistance and which would prove the most dangerous were it to join our enemies. Greece had had recourse to every pretext in order to evade coming to Serbia's assistance, and it was impossible to count on her co-operation, while, were she to side with Germany, her coasts would be at the mercy of the allied fleets. Serbia, on the other hand, could never make terms with the Central Powers, and it would not be a matter of great moment to us if she did, out of pique, delay taking the offensive against Austria. The one important factor in the situation was Bulgaria. Both for political and national reasons the forcing of the Dardanelles was of vital interest to Russia, and the co-operation of the Bulgarian army would greatly facilitate the accomplishment of that task. We ought, therefore, he maintained, to concentrate all our efforts on securing that co-operation even at the risk of offending other States.

His Majesty's Government had from the very outset

realized the importance of Bulgaria's co-operation, but in spite of their untiring efforts they had failed to induce the Governments of Belgrade and Athens to make the sacrifices necessary to secure it. Greece had refused to give up Cavalla, Serbia had declared that she could not cede national territory without the consent of the Great Skuptschina, and that it was impossible to convoke that assembly on account of the war. Roumania, on the other hand, had agreed to the eventual cession of Dobritch and Baltchik. During the course of these negotiations it became clear that the minimum price at which we could purchase Bulgaria's co-operation was the cession of the so-called uncontested zone in Macedonia. That zone had been recognized as hers under the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty of 1912, but had, after the Second Balkan War, been assigned to Serbia by the Treaty of Bucharest.

At the end of July it was decided, on Sir Edward Grey's suggestion, that the allied representatives at Belgrade should make an urgent appeal to the Serbian Government to consent to its cession on the termination of the war in return for Bulgaria's immediate effective co-operation. The Allies, they were to add, would engage to secure for Serbia such ample compensation as would fully realize the most important of her political and economic aspirations, and would also guarantee that her territorial connexion with Greece should be preserved. In order that this appeal might carry more weight, I was instructed to ask for an audience and to suggest that His Majesty should remind the Prince Regent that he had, at the beginning of the war, placed the fate of Serbia in the Emperor's hands and that the whole course of the war

would be imperilled should the Serbian Government refuse to comply with our request.

The Emperor received me in audience on July 28, and after I had explained the situation to him, said that he fully recognized the importance of ensuring the success of our operations in the Dardanelles by securing the co-operation of the Bulgarian army. He could not, however, send such a telegram to the Prince Regent. It was perfectly true that it was on Serbia's account that we had become involved in war; but Serbia was our ally and we had not treated her quite fairly. We had, without consulting her, sacrificed some of her important interests in order to satisfy Italy, and we were now about to give Roumania the Banat. A refusal on the part of the Prince Regent would, the Emperor added, place him in a very awkward position.

I replied that Serbia's heroism had our unstinted admiration and that we fully appreciated the services which she had rendered during the early stages of the war, but that for some months past she had not been in a position to take any action of importance. The Allies, on the other hand, had never ceased making enormous sacrifices, and Serbia could not expect them to do so indefinitely without herself making some counter-sacrifices. However much we might sympathize with her, we were fully justified in asking her to make a concession that would help to shorten the war. At the time of the First Balkan War access to the Adriatic and not Macedonia had been the main object of her ambitions, and that ambition would now be realized in a measure which had never before been contemplated. Macedonia, moreover, had only been Serbia's since the summer of 1913, while previous to

that date it had been recognized as Bulgarian by the Emperor Alexander II in 1877, and by Serbia herself in 1912. We were, moreover, only asking her to do what was necessary for her own safety, as, were Bulgaria to join the Central Powers, her very existence as a nation would be at stake.

The Emperor was impressed by what I had said and promised to reconsider the question, adding that it would be easier for him to act as had been suggested were King George, the King of Italy and President Poincaré to address similar telegrams to the Prince Regent. Sazonoff, to whom I communicated the substance of this conversation, entirely concurred in the Emperor's suggestion, which was eventually adopted. Sazonoff also remarked that he was very glad that I had spoken as I had done, as all the Emperor's sympathies were on the side of Serbia.

The Serbian reply to the communication eventually made them by the allied Powers was in the nature of a compromise. It was an acceptance in principle, but hedged round with reservations which, as the Bulgars would be content with nothing less than the whole of the uncontested zone, rendered it valueless for our purpose. Under the treaty of alliance which they had concluded in the spring of 1913, Greece and Serbia had agreed not to cede any districts to the west of the Vardar. Greece, who had been careful to evade rendering Serbia the assistance which her treaty obligations prescribed, pressed for the observance of this particular clause. Though the negotiations at Sofia and Belgrade were continued, every day that passed rendered the prospect more hopeless. Russia's attitude during the Second Balkan War had not been forgotten

at the former capital, while after the fall of Warsaw and Kovno the cause of the Allies was regarded as lost. King Ferdinand, who had throughout been intriguing with the Central Powers, was not the man to attach himself to the losing side, more especially when Germany was prepared to pay him double the price which the Allies were offering for his co-operation. Our proposals, moreover, were generally regarded as too vague. Nothing, indeed, short of an absolute assurance of Bulgaria's acquisition of the uncontested zone would have stayed the march of events, while the idea of paying off old scores on Serbia was popular with the army.

O'Beirne, who had been with me at Petrograd as Counsellor of Embassy, and who afterwards lost his life when travelling with Lord Kitchener to Russia, had been sent as Minister to Sofia, but unfortunately too late to retrieve the mistakes of his predecessor. He had early in September expressed the opinion that, though Serbia might reject some of our demands, she would acquiesce were they imposed on her, and he was, in my opinion, right. I had myself, in the conversations which I and my French colleague had daily with Sazonoff, spoken in a very similar sense. Paléologue, on the contrary, protested that we could not hold such language or inflict such a humiliation on an ally. The stakes, however, for which we were playing were too high to allow considerations for the feelings of any Government to influence our policy. Could we but have won over Bulgaria to our side, Roumania would almost certainly have cast in her lot with us in the autumn of 1915. Turkey's fate would then have been sealed, and the whole course of the war would have been

changed. It was, perhaps, natural that Serbia should hesitate to cede what she regarded as her national territory, but it would have been different had the allied Governments dictated such a course to her. Had they insisted on her allowing Bulgaria to occupy the uncontested zone then and there it is doubtful whether Bulgaria, no matter how far King Ferdinand had committed himself in the negotiations with the Central Powers, would, even at the eleventh hour, have marched against us. She certainly would not have done so had we taken such action earlier in the year. Sazonoff did all that it was possible to do under the circumstances, but he was not empowered to hold the only language that would have turned the scales at Belgrade. Strong pressure would, no doubt, have been required to induce the Emperor, whose sympathies, as was but natural, were all on the side of the Serbs, to consent to the Allies imposing their wishes at Belgrade. But had they done so the war would have been considerably shortened and Russia might have been spared the horrors of the Bolshevik revolution.

With Bulgaria definitely engaged on the side of the Central Powers and with the Russian army exhausted after its long retreat, it was useless to expect Roumania to march. Even before the fall of Warsaw the Emperor had admitted, in the course of my audience recorded above, that it would be a mistake to press her to take the field till the Russian army was in a position to resume the offensive. The Allies had, therefore, to content themselves with the political agreement and to leave the date of her entry into action to be settled later on by a military convention.

CHAPTER XVIII

1915

EARLY in 1915 the Russians had taken the great fortress of Przemysl and advanced to within a few miles of Cracau. They had also crossed the Carpathians and made a descent into the Hungarian plain. But, owing to the shortage of shells and rifles, they were unable to follow up these victories; and the Germans, who were aware of this, determined to restore the situation in the eastern theatre of war by the transfer of several army corps from the west. Mackensen, who had been sent to take over the command of the Austro-German forces, commenced operations early in May, and the Russian army—exposed to a terrific bombardment, to which it could make no effective reply, and weakened by the absence of the troops detached for service in the Carpathians—retired all along the line.

One after another of its hard-won conquests had to be abandoned. In June Przemysl and Lemberg fell, and in August Warsaw, Novogeorgievsk, Kovno, Grodno and Brest Litowsk surrendered in rapid succession. During this long and disastrous retreat the losses in killed, wounded and prisoners were colossal. The shortage in rifles was so great that a considerable percentage of the men had to wait unarmed till they could pick up the rifles of their fallen comrades. The only wonder was that the army remained intact. At

one time Petrograd itself was in such danger that steps were taken to transfer the archives and gold reserve to Vologda. There had also been a question of removing the art treasures of the Hermitage, but the Emperor had vetoed the proposal for fear that it might create a panic. Happily, the further German advance was stayed, and the arrangements for the evacuation of the capital were suspended. The German offensive in Courland was attended with equal success, and as a precautionary measure the plant of the Riga factories was removed eastwards. For the next nine months the Russian army was virtually immobilized on the line which it had occupied towards the middle of September, though from time to time it achieved a few brilliant local successes.

On September 5, when the military situation was at its worst, the Emperor assumed the supreme command of his armies, with General Alexeieff as chief of the staff, although his Ministers had done their utmost to dissuade him from taking what they regarded as a dangerous step. The allied Governments, who had received the announcement with considerable apprehension, were naturally precluded from expressing their preference for the retention of the Grand Duke Nicholas as commander-in-chief. To have done so would have been to intervene in a purely internal question on which the Emperor had already taken a decision. I had once, indeed—in February, 1915—been instructed to intercede in favour of a well-known revolutionary (Bourtzeff) who, on returning to Russia for the purpose of inducing his comrades to suspend their subversive activities and to work for the successful prosecution of the war, had been arrested and sentenced

to deportation to Siberia. The patriotic letter which Bourtzeff had published before leaving for Russia had, as I told Sazonoff privately, made such a favourable impression in England that it was generally hoped that he would be pardoned.

Sazonoff kindly undertook to plead his cause with the Emperor, and His Majesty, after some hesitation, was pleased to pardon him. But, in discussing the question with Sazonoff, the Emperor had remarked that it was curious what a much greater interest the English and French took in the internal affairs of Russia than the Russians did in those of England and France—a gentle reminder to us that to concern ourselves with questions affecting the Government of Russia was to tread on forbidden ground. I took advantage, nevertheless, of an audience which I had early in September with the Empress to tell Her Majesty that I shared the apprehensions with which the Emperor's decision was viewed by the Council of Ministers. Not only, I said, would His Majesty have to bear the whole responsibility for any fresh disaster that might befall his armies, but he would, by combining the duties of commander-in-chief with those of the autocratic ruler of a great Empire, be undertaking a task beyond the strength of any single man. The Empress at once protested, saying that the Emperor ought to have assumed the command from the very first and that, now that his army had suffered so severely, his proper place was with his troops. "I have no patience," she continued, "with Ministers who try to prevent him doing his duty. The situation requires firmness. The Emperor, unfortunately, is weak; but I am not, and I intend to be firm." Her

Majesty kept her word. The Emperor, when in residence at Headquarters, could not keep in constant touch with his Ministers, and was too absorbed by military matters to give that close attention to questions of internal policy which the growing gravity of the situation demanded. The result was that the Empress, more especially after Stürmer became President of the Council in February, 1916, virtually governed Russia.

Among other reasons that had prompted Her Majesty to encourage the Emperor to take over the command was the suspicion that the Grand Duke's prestige as commander-in-chief was gradually eclipsing that of his Sovereign. She was, in fact, jealous of him. On the other hand, the Grand Duke's enemies, of whom Rasputin was one, had done their utmost to discredit him at Court by representing that the reverses of the Russian army were due to his faulty leadership. Rasputin, indeed, had a special reason for hating the Grand Duke, for when, earlier in the war, he had telegraphed for permission to come to the front to bless the troops, the Grand Duke had replied, "Do come! I will hang you."

So much has been written about that ignoble personage that there is little left for me to tell. A story was at one time current at Petrograd that during one of my audiences at Tsarskoe Rasputin suddenly entered the room, and that, on the Emperor naming him to me, I at once took my leave. Needless to say that this, like so many other stories of his sayings and doings, is a pure fable. There were, however, many *salons* in Petrograd where he was an honoured guest and the centre of an admiring circle of lady devotees

—in spite of the fact that he not only dressed like a peasant, but made a point of appearing unwashed and unkempt. My friend Paléologue tells us, in his book on Russia, how he met him in one of these houses, and how Rasputin, at the close of their conversation, "*me serre contre sa poitrine.*" I, personally, never attempted to gratify my curiosity by meeting him in this way, as I did not consider it right to enter into personal contact with him.

The native of a Siberian village and the son of an uneducated moujik, he had been nicknamed "Rasputin," or the Debauchee, on account of his dissolute life. The Russian peasant is a curious combination of good and evil. He is full of contradictions —he can be gentle and brutal, religious and vicious. Rasputin was no exception to this rule. A drunkard and a sensualist, the mysticism latent in his character had in earlier life been awakened by the exhortations of a priest whom he happened to be driving to some distant village. This drive constituted what he himself described as his journey to Damascus, for, as in the case of St. Paul, a voice had spoken to him on the way. Deeply moved, he vowed to lead a new life. Wandering as a pilgrim from village to village, he lived on such alms as he could collect, preaching and effecting cures by his magnetic touch. In one of the monasteries, where he made a prolonged stay, he learned to read and write, and even picked up a smattering of theology. A few years later he went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

He thus gradually acquired the reputation of a holy man, or elder (*staretz*), and was credited with the gifts of healing and prophecy. He experienced,

however, many backslidings, and during most of the time he led a double life. He acted up to the doctrine which he preached that repentance can alone bring salvation, but that one cannot repent if one has not sinned. To yield to temptation was, therefore, the first stage on the road to salvation. The sect which he eventually founded was an offshoot of that of the Khlysty, or Flagellants. Its members aspired, in some strange way, to direct communion with God; but their services, which were held at night, savoured rather of the Bacchanalia of ancient Rome than of the rites of a Christian Church. Singing and shouting, they moved round in a circle, quickening the pace at each turn till, after whirling round in a mad dance, they sank exhausted to the ground. There then followed a scene over which it is best to draw a veil. Rasputin was well fitted to be the high priest of such a sect, for he exercised an extraordinary fascination over women. Though as a general rule he behaved abominably to them, his victims put up with every kind of ill-treatment sooner than leave him. Only one woman turned on him and nearly killed him by stabbing him in the abdomen.

Rasputin's reputation for holiness gradually spread to the capital, and in 1905 he was summoned there by a well-known Archimandrite, under whose auspices he made his entrance into St. Petersburg society. He had soon a large circle of admirers, including the two Montenegrin Princesses, the wives of the Grand Dukes Nicholas and Peter, and it was through their good offices that he was, two years later, presented at Court. There he was careful to reveal only the mystic side of his nature. By personal magnetism or by some

form of hypnotic suggestion he did undoubtedly relieve the hæmophilia from which the Tsarevitch—a charming boy, the idol of both his parents—had long suffered. Believing, as she did, that Rasputin could by his prayers preserve her son's life, the Empress centred all her hopes on him and regarded him with feelings akin to adoration. She absolutely declined to credit the stories of his debauched life, even when one of his drunken orgies had occasioned the intervention of the police. For her he was always blameless—a God-fearing man, reviled and persecuted like the saints of old.

Rasputin had the natural cunning of the Russian peasant, but he was no ordinary impostor. He believed in himself—in his preternatural powers—in his gift of reading the decrees of fate. He warned the Empress that if his enemies succeeded in getting him sent away evil would befall the Tsarevitch, as his presence was indispensable to the latter's well-being. So it turned out. He had to retire to Siberia for a time, and the boy grew worse. On one occasion, in the autumn of 1912, his illness, in consequence of an accident, took such an acute form that his life was in danger. Rasputin, who was at once communicated with, sent a comforting telegram, assuring the Empress that her son would live. An improvement set in, the boy recovered, and the Empress attributed his recovery to Rasputin's intercessions. Still more curious was it that he should have warned her that his own destiny was indissolubly bound up with that of the Imperial family—for he had not been dead three months before the Empire had passed away.

It had been through Madame Wyroubowa, the daughter of Taneiew, the head of the Emperor's

chancery, that Rasputin had in the first instance been able to get into such close touch with the Sovereigns. Madame Wyroubowa, who had made an unhappy marriage, had, since her separation from her husband, found consolation in religion, while she had become the inseparable companion and confidante of the Empress, who had taken pity on her when she was in trouble. She was one of the first to profess implicit belief in the *staretz*, and, as he foresaw, she proved an invaluable ally. Acting as intermediary between him and the Empress, consulting him on all questions, corresponding with him during his short visits to Siberia, she consistently encouraged Her Majesty to be guided by his advice. She also made herself useful by reporting to the Empress what people in high positions were saying and thinking, and in order to draw them into an expression of their views on political questions she would give them to understand that she was consulting them on behalf of their Majesties. Too stupid herself to form a clear judgment about men and things, she became the unconscious tool of Rasputin and of those with whom he was acting. I both disliked her and mistrusted her, and saw her seldom.

The rôle actually played by Rasputin at Court is still veiled in a good deal of mystery. His ascendancy over the Emperor was not so absolute as that which he exercised over the Empress, and concerned questions of a religious or ecclesiastical kind rather than of policy. He interested himself chiefly, at first, in securing for his friends and adherents high appointments in the Orthodox Church and in dispossessing any prelate who had ventured to speak disparagingly of him. Thanks to his protection, a most undesirable friend of his boy-

hood, an uneducated peasant, Varnava by name, was appointed Bishop of Tobolsk, while a little later Pitirim, a man of very doubtful morals, was made Metropolitan of Petrograd.

Gradually, however, he began to take a hand in the political game. He was on intimate terms with several of the more reactionary Ministers, who were at one and the same time his patrons and clients. A few words written on a slip of paper sufficed to secure the granting by these Ministers of the requests of his protégés. He would, on the other hand, in his conversations with the Empress and Madame Wyroubowa, speak in the sense which they desired, or he would advocate the appointment of some reactionary friend of his to a vacant Ministry. He thus indirectly influenced the Emperor in the choice of his Ministers, and consequently in the course of his policy. This was more especially the case when, after the assumption by the Emperor of the supreme command, the Empress became all powerful.

But, while it was Rasputin's influence that was the dominating factor, the political strings were pulled by others whose interests he served and whose intrigues he countenanced. Uneducated, and engrossed by the pursuit of carnal pleasures, he was hardly the man to conceive or formulate any concrete policy. He left that to others, and was content to follow their lead. Self-interest was his guiding principle through life, and no one knew better than he how to turn the tables on those who were rash enough to denounce him to the Emperor. Among others, Kokovtsoff, when President of the Council, had vainly endeavoured to open His Majesty's eyes to Rasputin's

M. PITIRIM, METROPOLITAN OF PETROGRAD

(From a photograph in the possession of Sir Ian Malcolm)

true character, with the result that he was eventually dismissed; while Prince Orloff, who had for years been at the head of the Emperor's military cabinet, was, for the same reason, summarily relegated to a post on the Grand Duke Nicholas's staff in the Caucasus.

The internal situation, meanwhile, was going from bad to worse, and the general dissatisfaction with the conduct of the war was venting itself in attacks on the Emperor and Empress. The latter was always spoken of as "The German," in spite of the fact that she had, as she told me herself, broken all the ties that connected her with Germany. Rasputin was at the same time accused of being in German pay—a charge that was not, strictly speaking, correct. He was not in immediate communication with Berlin, and he did not receive money directly from the Germans; but he was largely financed by certain Jewish bankers, who were, to all intents and purposes, German agents. As he was in the habit of repeating to these Jewish friends of his all that he heard at Tsarskoe, and as the Empress consulted him on both military and political questions, much useful information reached the Germans through this indirect channel. Without being their regular agent, he was, moreover, rendering them yeoman service by discrediting the Imperial régime and by thus paving the way for the revolution.

The situation was one which the Germans were not slow to exploit. They had already started their peace propaganda among the troops at the front, and had their spies everywhere. Through one of them—Lieut.-Colonel Miassoyeidow, who was afterwards hanged—they had secured such valuable information

about the movements of the Russian troops that they had been able on more than one occasion to counter the latter's projected offensive. Petrograd was throughout the war infested with their secret agents and sympathizers. The atmosphere was generally charged with pessimism, and exaggerated reports were constantly circulated respecting the hopelessness of the military outlook. At Moscow it was different. There the national spirit, instead of being cowed by the disheartening news from the front, was stirred to fresh efforts, and the anti-German feeling was so strong that in June all shops bearing German names or that were suspected of having any German connexions were raided.

By its failure to meet the requirements of the army the administration had forfeited the confidence of the nation, and all parties, with the exception of the extreme right, were agreed that recourse must be had to extraordinary measures for the purpose of intensifying production. Thanks to the initiative taken in the matter by President Rodzianko, the Emperor, early in June, appointed a strong committee, composed of representatives of the army, the Duma and industry, with powers to mobilize Russian industries for war purposes. But this was not sufficient in itself, and Rodzianko at the same time urged His Majesty to convoke the Duma and to purge the Ministry of some of its more reactionary and incompetent members.

His Majesty yielded, and, in spite of the opposition of the Empress's camarilla, Maklakoff, the Minister of the Interior, was replaced by Prince Scherbatoff, a broad-minded man of moderate views. As I happened,

a few days later, to meet the Emperor at the launching of a battle cruiser, I endeavoured to encourage him to proceed further in this direction by referring to the recent reconstruction of Mr. Asquith's Cabinet. In England, I told him, all party differences had been forgotten, and Mr. Asquith had now formed a coalition of all the best brains in the country as the surest way of securing a successful prosecution of the war. The Emperor admitted that this was the only course to pursue in a great national crisis like the present, and for a time it almost seemed as if he was going to act up to this principle. Sukholimoff (the Minister of War), Schteglovitoff (the Minister of Justice), Sabler (the Procurator of the Holy Synod) were successively dismissed, and replaced in their respective offices by Polivanoff, Khvostoff and Samarin. It was while he was at Headquarters, and no longer under the Empress's immediate influence, that His Majesty made the above appointments.

One of the first acts of Samarin was to tell the Emperor that he could not be responsible for the administration of the affairs of the Orthodox Church if Rasputin was to be allowed to control them from behind the scenes. Rasputin was in consequence given a hint to absent himself for a few weeks. The convocation of the Duma had also been conceded by the Emperor, and when it met, on July 30, deputy after deputy denounced the incompetence of an administration that had brought such untold disasters on the Russian army. By a large majority the chamber invited the Government to try Sukholimoff, while a Liberal deputy (Maklakoff, the brother of the former Minister of the Interior) declared that what the country

required was to have "the right men in the right places."

With the departure of the Emperor for Headquarters to take over the supreme command the reactionaries once more gained the ascendant. On September 26 the Duma was prorogued. Two days later the more liberal-minded members of the Government—Sazonoff, Scherbatoff, Samarin, Krivoshein, Bark and Shahovskoi—addressed a collective letter to the Emperor, beseeching him to change the course of his policy and saying that it was impossible for them any longer to serve under Goremykin. They were summoned by the Emperor to the Stavka and told that he could not tolerate such interference by his Ministers in the choice of his President of the Council. Owing to his having addressed the envelope containing that letter to the Emperor, Sazonoff was regarded by the Empress as the ringleader of this cabal. She never forgave him and never rested till she had secured his dismissal.

About the same time the Union of Zemstvos and the Union of Town Councils had held a meeting at Moscow, in which a resolution was passed demanding the immediate convocation of the Duma and the appointment of a Government that possessed the confidence of the nation. Each union had further deputed three of its members to submit the above demands orally to the Emperor. Acting on the advice tendered by Goremykin, His Majesty refused to receive them, while he commanded Prince Scherbatoff to summon the respective presidents of the two unions—Prince Lvoff and the mayor of Moscow, M. Chelnokoff—to Petrograd, and to read to them the following

message: "I place a very high value on the noble work which the zemstvos and town councils have done and are doing for the wounded and refugees (from the provinces in German occupation); but I do not consider that they have any right to interfere in political matters, which are centred in the Government. I, therefore, command you to say what you have to say to the Minister of the Interior, who has orders to report to me." The two delegates replied that they had been charged by their unions to lay Moscow's representations before the Emperor, and that for His Majesty to refuse to receive them would constitute a break between the Sovereign and his people. Prince Scherbatoff was so impressed by what they said that he finally consented to submit the matter for His Majesty's reconsideration. He did so, and was at once dismissed. Chelnokoff, a man of very moderate views, subsequently summed up the situation by saying that it was intolerable that Russia should be governed by a doting reactionary like Goremykin and by a drunken scoundrel like Rasputin.

Samarin, who was one of the most popular and respected members of the Government, shared Scherbatoff's fate. It will be remembered that Rasputin had succeeded in getting his friend Varnava appointed Bishop of Tobolsk, and the latter's conduct had since caused such a public scandal that Samarin had had to call him to account. His own dismissal was the result.

Shortly afterwards another excellent Minister—Krivoshein, who had as Minister of Agriculture rendered important services in carrying out Stolypin's agrarian reforms—was forced to resign for no other reason than that he had incurred the displeasure of the

reactionary party by his outspoken language on the situation. He was a personal friend of mine, and I had frequently urged on him the necessity of keeping the nation united by timely concessions, as well as the crying need of decentralization in such a vast Empire. A strong nationalist, he was nevertheless liberal-minded, and was in favour of reforming the administration, though he doubted whether it was feasible to introduce far-reaching reforms during the war.

In an audience which I had during a flying visit of the Emperor's to Tsarskoe in November, His Majesty made an earnest appeal to His Majesty's Government to supply the Russian army with rifles. If only they would do so he could, he said, place 800,000 men in his field at once, and strike a crushing blow at the Germans while they were still exhausted after their long campaign. Were the present favourable moment to be allowed to pass, the Germans would have time to fortify their lines, as they had in the west, and any offensive which the Russian army might take later would be doomed to failure. The position of that army was, indeed, a pathetic one, but I could hold out no hope of our being able to supply rifles on so large a scale. I regretted this all the more because, as I told the Emperor, there was a growing feeling of disaffection among the Russian troops, who had been left almost defenceless before the enemy.

I also pointed out that, apart from the question of supply, there was also that of delivery, and that if Russia was ever to receive from abroad the war material in which she was so deficient, drastic steps would have to be taken to expedite the construction of the Murman railway, that was to connect her capital with

the only ice-free port—Alexandrovsk. The Emperor agreed that the work of construction ought to be placed under the control of some energetic and competent official, but he did not approve of the candidate whom I had ventured to suggest for the post. He did, however, shortly afterwards appoint a new Minister of Ways and Communications—M. Trepoff—who, though belonging to the extreme right, proved an excellent administrator. It was thanks to his untiring efforts that the railway was completed by the end of 1916.

While the Emperor's internal policy, inspired as it was for the most part by the Empress and those in her immediate entourage, cannot be defended, the two following stories, told me by Sazonoff, will show how irreproachable was his attitude towards Germany.

Early in December Count Frederichs, who had for years past been Minister of the Imperial Court, received a letter from his former friend, Count Eulenburg (the Grand Marshal of the Court at Berlin), suggesting that they ought both to direct their efforts to putting an end to the existing deplorable misunderstanding between their Sovereigns, and to bringing about a *rapprochement* that would enable their Governments to negotiate peace on honourable terms. The Emperor, on being told of this letter, commanded Count Frederichs to read it to him, and the latter proceeded to do so in the original German. His Majesty at once stopped him, saying, "Read it in Russian. I do not understand German." When the Count had finished, the Emperor took the letter and, underlining a passage in which Count Eulenburg had spoken of "their old friendship," wrote in the margin, "That

friendship is dead and buried." He then sent for Sazonoff, and told him to prepare a draft reply. When, on the following day, Sazonoff brought him a draft, in which Count Eulenburg was told that if the Emperor William wanted peace he must address a similar proposal to all the Allies, His Majesty said that on reflection he had decided that the letter should be left unanswered, as any reply, however repellent, might be taken as evidence of his desire to enter into negotiations.

A few weeks later further overtures were addressed to His Majesty through another channel. A Mlle. Wassiltchikoff, belonging to an old Russian family, had, when war broke out, been living in her villa on the Semmering, where she had remained ever since. She had recently gone to Darmstadt, on the invitation of the Grand Duke of Hesse, and had been sent by him to Petrograd charged with the mission of inducing the Emperor to conclude peace. She was empowered to say that the Emperor William was prepared to grant Russia most advantageous terms; that England had already made overtures to Germany for a separate peace; and that a reconciliation between Russia and Germany was necessary for dynastic reasons. The Grand Duke gave her a written statement in the above sense for her to give Sazonoff, as well as two open letters for the Emperor and Empress. On arrival at Petrograd she at once went to the Ministry and handed the Grand Duke's statement and letters to Sazonoff. The latter told her that she had acted disgracefully in undertaking such a mission, and the Emperor, to whom he made a report on the subject, was so angry that he gave orders to have her interned in a convent,

Before concluding the story of the year 1915 I may mention that at the end of May I had the personal satisfaction of receiving from Sir Edward Grey a letter in which he said:

I have followed with great appreciation the way in which you have conducted your conversations in Petrograd since the outbreak of the war. All your actions seem to me admirable in substance, form and opportuneness.

I have therefore asked the Prime Minister to recommend you for a G.C.B. in the forthcoming list of Birthday Honours.

Meanwhile I wish you to know that all that you have done is really appreciated by His Majesty's Government, as well as by me.

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My mission to Russia

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